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[THE BURDEN OF A SECRET.]

LORD JASPER'S SECRET;

—OR—

BETWEEN PALACE AND PRISON.

By the Author of "Lady Violet's Victims."

CHAPTER I.

IS THE CHILD LIVING?

Why does my blood thus muster to my heart,
Making both that unable for itself,
And dispossessing all my other parts
Of necessary fitness?

"The question is, Lord Jasper, are you or are you not going to-night with me to the theatre?"

The lady speaking these words was one of those ultra-fashionable, grand ladies who are the chief adornment of the great world, in which riding-habits, tight skirts, ritualism, the opera, and kettledrums are considered the necessary condition of life.

Lady Jasper's park hack was a peerless animal, one of a rare and splendid stud, a little too playful, perhaps, in the stable to be pleasant, but unapproachable in the hunting field. And Lady Jasper was one of the hardest riders of all the lady riders among the huntresses following Baron Vanda's hounds, which is, perhaps, saying a good deal for her pluck and skill.

Lord Jasper Fitzmaurice seemed to have forgotten his wife was speaking. Fortune had possibly made him one of her spoilt favourites in the matter of wealth and rank, but all this

had not bestowed any appearance of superfluous happiness in his visage.

"Go with you to the theatre, Emmeline? Why yes, if you wish it."

He spoke wearily, and made a sign as though desiring to be alone. Lady Emmeline's silk dress rustled over the hearth-rug (sometimes the costliest silk will be obtrusive) and said, slowly:

"You have been engaged in making your will to-day, have you not?"

Lord Jasper, shivering a little at the rustle of the garment, shook his head. His wife now spoke impetuously.

"You cannot deceive me," she said, warmly. "What is this secret mystery that haunts you by night and harasses you by day? I believe it is killing you, Jasper!" resting her hand on his shoulder; "can you not confide in—in your wife?"

"My wife!" he repeated. "Yes, you are my wife."

Lady Emmeline continued:

"The person who has passed from this room but a moment previously, Jasper, was your lawyer. Why are you and he in such close communication together? and why after he has left are you still more weak and prostrate?"

"Cut out the 'Whys,' for goodness' sake, Emmeline; one would think you were a rising lawyer yourself," answered his lordship.

"Jasper, you never could have loved me, or you would confide in me now."

"Love, my dear, is only an episode in the lives of men; but we won't discuss that. Sufficient, I am to go to the theatre with you, Maude, and my son. That was all you wanted to hear in seeking me, was it not?"

"No, Jasper, decidedly not all. A dreadful fear at times haunts me that I am——"

"Ah, I thought there was a fair sprinkle of selfishness in your solicitude; that 'I am figures a good deal in your conversations.'"

"The year, Jasper, we were married, about this time, when we were having a dinner-party, I saw a face peering through the blinds, the wind lifting the loose tresses of hair from the brow, and a fixed stare of anguish in the eyes, the memory of which will not fade from my mind. I screamed, the figure vanished, and you, Jasper, white to the lips, trembling, pallid, and overcome, knew who that woman was!"

Lord Jasper again lifted his hand as if in deprecation, a thin white hand, bloodless and emaciated.

"Your imagination, my love, leads you on to strange flights, so that the face of a half-crazed woman who has the presumption to watch us at our meals, instantly presents itself to you in the light of a phenomenon I must have been acquainted with." And he held her wrist in a clasp of steel; his light blue eyes had a determined if dreamy look, as he added: "Don't refer to the subject again."

A grating sound of wheels and a loud ring at the bell warned Lady Fitzmaurice of the arrival of visitors, and the powdered footman soon ushered some fashionable callers into the drawing-room.

Lady Emmeline withdrew as the cards were offered her on a silver salver. Lord Jasper alone, once more sunk into profound stupor, but he has a habit of talking aloud in a dreary kind of monologue, and there is one name he mutters

as he takes out a paper from a drawer. This paper is a copy of his will.

"Camelia! Camelia!"

Who is this lost Camelia whose name he repeats even as Petrarch apostrophised the shades of Laura, only in this case it was the record of a shattered home, the tragedy of a wasted life. The young and beautiful wife he now deplored had died years ago, and yet he grieved for her still. Perhaps harshness, misunderstanding and the fatal influence of an unscrupulous traitor had wrought this bankruptcy of love.

"Ah, Camelia!" he murmurs, rising and standing by the hearth. "She loved me after all, and I refused to forgive, so that she fled to him—the serpent who betrayed her. An opera singer forsooth, whom she first fancied was an ideal hero of romance."

He took a letter from his pocket and read it slowly over.

"Harsh and unkind—she calls me that. Oh, Heaven, if she could see me now."

He buried his face in his hands and remained a few minutes thus. The servant tapping at the door brought him some luncheon on a tray, and so absorbed was his lordship in thought, the footman, Thomas, deposited the soup by his side, without his appearing aware of his presence.

"Which if it don't prove as master's wrong in the upper story, I'll eat my epaulettes," the footman muttered, nearly falling against the keen-eyed nurse, who obstructed his path.

"Look where you're going, my friend," this individual cried, stopping short and looking hard at Thomas. "Now, you just answer my question."

"Here, Nurse Slater, you're a tough 'un."

"Refresh your memory with a little Scotch whiskey, and tell me who you're let out this morning."

Thomas drank the whiskey and reflected.

"The Honourable Mr. Pennywick, our young ladies' friends, the Misses de Vandermere, parties addicted to painting china, afternoon teas, and such like; Lady de Vere; Honourable Mrs. Marshall; her they call Sappo; Markis de Neuvin, and another."

"No one else?"

"Wait a minute. You kind o' force my nut," and Thomas touched his cerebral organs reflectively.

"Speak on, Thomas."

"I'm thinking, Mrs. Slater. Let me refresh my memory again," he said, taking up the bottle and refilling his glass.

"Now, as you were letting a bald-headed elderly gentleman out of the hall-door, what did he slip into your hand? Was it a sovereign, or half-sovereign?"

Thomas' perturbed faculties appeared more disordered.

"Ah! ah! hum! You mean little Mr. Codicil?"

"Exactly. Now, Thomas, try and think what he said, or—you'll get notice in a week."

"Oh, I know you're well in with my lord. Well," he said, "says he, 'Are you in want of a place?'"

The nurse smiled.

"Won't do, Thomas; try again."

"Because, he says, I'll recommend—"

"Idiot! Can you deceive me? What did he say about letting him out so as nobody knew?"

"Lor! was you there then, nurse?" asked the startled Thomas, the powder falling furiously around him in his dismay. "Little Mr. Codicil, as alays speaks like a gentleman should, did make that remark to yours truly, Thomas P. Griffin."

"There, return to the servants' hall," said the nurse. "Don't make yourself ill over the boiled mutton and turnips and caper sauce they've got for dinner in the kitchen."

The nurse now assailed the owner of the mansion by a short tap at the door, and this time his lordship lifted his head.

"Oh, is it you, nurse? What news of—of her?"

Mrs. Slater sat down on the green leather couch without any ceremony—without, indeed, waiting for his lordship's permission.

"Well, all that is at present known is that the opera singer is dead."

"But my—Camelia? What of her?"

"Disappeared long since, Lord Jasper."

But she knew considerably more of the missing lady than she cared to reveal.

"No further news?" Then, after a slight pause: "Is the child living?"

A faint flicker passed over the nurse's features as she answered, gravely:

"That is not quite clear. Some believe the child also died. The woman went to America whom Mrs. Carl—Lady Fitzmaurice—beg pardon, I get confused—entrusted it to. It is well known the opera-singer Carlton deserted and abandoned her, and that her ladyship's anguish was so great she did not hesitate at suicide."

Lord Jasper starts to his feet, and drops of perspiration moisten his brow.

"I know," he muttered, leaning wearily back. Her fate is too horrible to contemplate; her highly-wrought nature could not bear the intolerable misery which her impetuous despair daily increased, and I have never ceased to suffer."

The nurse regarded him steadily.

"That letter, my lord, your unfortunate wife sent to you, explaining all, imploring your forgiveness and pity, and commending the child to your love and care—your child, Lord Jasper, as you well know—that letter, I say, you tore into pieces in your ungovernable rage, and now what clue can we find to trace your daughter?"

His face darkened as he listened.

"I sent for you, Mrs. Slater, as I feel to grow weaker daily, and it is my greatest wish that my daughter, wherever she may be, shall never know the dreary of want."

"Yes," the nurse answered; "you are thinking of your joyful marriage-morning years ago; of the beautiful young lady who adored you, of her parents' love and hopes, and your own unreasonable jealousy which another fanned to a flame."

"I do not wish to be reminded of Evelyn Carlton, the villain who sowed dissension and misery in our lives."

"I have news of him, my lord. It may be a false report, but they say Evelyn Carlton has been shot through the heart in a duel with a French editor, who had long sworn to avenge some wrong."

Lord Jasper's thin and attenuated hands were again lifted, but this time it was hatred which lent them force. He gripped the edge of the chair as though to rend it in twain, but no words escaped his lips. His enemy and rival then had been killed in a duel! Lord Jasper lifts his luminous eyes to the speaker's face. She can see that he is glad.

"I nursed your first wife Camelia, my lord, when she was but an infant. I watched her growing youth and beauty with a mother's love. I cared for her, I think, more than any human being living; and when I was sent for to recognise her maimed and shattered loveliness some instinct told me it was you who had been most to blame."

"Spare these reproaches, Mrs. Slater. You can see and judge for yourself the state of my health."

"The motherless girl Camelia clung to me. I saved her from her father's brutal treatment; ay, from being thrown into a convent against her will. I sometimes wish I had never interfered, and that this wretched lady, dead so many years, had lived a peaceful, religious life, sheltered by a nunnery's walls."

Dead so long now! Yes, many years had elapsed since terror, agony and ruin had driven the Lady Camelia to her doom.

"There may be an eternal re-union," Lord Jasper whispers, almost under his breath; the nurse, listening eagerly, does not catch his words. "I have made my will," he said, after a pause.

Now she listens, eager, keen and cautious.

Strange that this man, so reserved and cool to his family, should take this grey-headed nurse so unrestrictedly into his confidence.

"And under the iron chest in one of the drawers of an old desk is—"

"Papa! papa!" cries a girlish voice at the door, "where are you? The Duchess of Vauxcluse is so anxious to speak with you a moment before she leaves, and so mamma sent me to tell you to come."

It is his fair young daughter Maude who speaks; she strongly resembles her mother, Lady Emmeline, Lord Jasper's second wife.

"Why, my dear, do you so especially want me? You know I have a peculiar aversion to morning callers."

"The duchess has been telling us a dreadful history of a man who used to give singing lessons to her daughter, Lady Estelle."

"Carlton," echoed Lord Jasper, under his breath; "the opera singer."

"Go, my lord," whispered the nurse, "and learn if what I have heard is true, and if so, we shall not grieve if retribution has at last overtaken the woman-killer, Evelyn Carlton."

A well-educated person this nurse, to all appearances, and yet as Lord Jasper turned to leave the room with his daughter she laughs loudly and coarsely, a little too coarsely, perhaps to be quite in character with her natural cleverness.

"It was a good move, Evelyn," she mutters; "a capital blind, my dear. It was worthy of the tricks of your stage. Dead, you are no longer dangerous to my lord, or likely to frustrate his benevolent intentions regarding Eustacia."

That splendid woman of fashion the Duchess of Vauxcluse tête-à-tête with her brilliant rival Lady Emmeline Fitzmaurice in the drawing-room had evidently a good deal to say in the affair.

Evelyn Carlton, the finest "Gennaro" the stage had ever produced—the man whose reckless extravagance eclipsed his virtues, and who had wrought more division in family love and honour than any hero in any libretto save, perhaps, the terrible "Don Giovanni," had, so report declared, applied the victim of another's fury.

Being addicted to the intoxicating lure of gambling, the popular tenor had no objection to increase his income by giving singing lessons to the aristocracy at the moderate rate of two guineas a lesson, provided he was able to save his system from exhaustion by their not extending the judicious limits of twenty minutes' duration.

The aristocracy having more guineas than it quite knows what to do with, were delighted to be taught by so superb an artist, and a bow of recognition from "Gennaro" during a morning concert was as much valued as a king's salute. And now to learn of the cruel victory of his enemy because the amiable tenor was not "neat" at pistol-shooting, whatever his other accomplishments, sent a thrill through his admirers' hearts.

"Is it not quite too shocking?" the duchess was saying; "and he had just sent us tickets too, so nice of him, and Estelle was making such astonishing progress under his tuition."

Lady Emmeline's bright eyes were seeking her husband's face.

"Do you say he was shot in a duel?"

"Yes, through the heart—so terrible; and a bunch of violets was picked up afterwards close by the spot."

Lord Jasper has something else to ask, and this time Lady Emmeline withdraws her gate and studies the duchess's costume.

"Did you ever hear anything of his wife?" he asks, after the feminine interest and gush in the matter had subsided.

"His wife was a fair-haired, delicate little creature who wore mourning. She was just seventeen, and has retired into a convent since his death; this makes it, you know, so much more interesting. How she must have loved him to prefer a life of self-denial to pleasure."

Others, too, had loved this gay deceiver.

Lord Jasper's hand again contracted. Camelia had been long since forgotten, and swept away from Carlton's memory, and yet was it retributive fate that had caused him to meet his

death by a bullet, when Camelia herself had courted death with one.

"The last time Estelle had a lesson of this heaven-gifted but unfortunate man—and oh, how exquisitely he sang 'Di Pescatore,' a photograph was found on the floor which she picked up—a portrait of some artist we suppose," said the duchess, unfastening her velvet reticule, "and we have it here."

Lord Jasper leans forward; Lady Fitzmaurice takes the photo up carelessly.

"A fine face; but hardly young," she remarked, "or trouble may have aged it then," turning it over in her hand, she passes it over to her husband.

Lord Jasper shrinks as it were within himself.

"What do you think of it?" she continued. What he thought of it remained unknown, for, to the surprise of all, Lord Jasper's head declined, and he fell from his chair, lying senseless on the floor.

They said he was heartless always, and yet he had disease of the heart.

"Fainted!" cried the duchess. "How the least emotion upsets him."

Lady Emmeline, still regarding the photograph, asks, politely, as a matter of curiosity, if they may retain it for a day or two.

The duchess, amazed at the same, accedes graciously to the request, and after a few seconds the fainting man revives.

"I must indeed be weak," he muttered, "if these attacks seize me without rhyme or reason."

Lady Emmeline locks the photo carefully away in a drawer; the hidden mystery and suffering in her husband's life may be explained some day through this silent witness of the past. And he had but to-day learnt the real end of his much-loved wife. He was now more than ever anxious to provide for the absent child she had so frequently alluded to in her letters to him.

His daughter!

How he regretted his past harshness and bitterness.

Was it too late to recover this missing child thrown on the world's mercy?

CHAPTER II.

MRS. SLATER AT HOME.

A tender paleness stealing o'er her cheek
Veiled her sweet smile as 'twere a passing cloud.

MRS. SLATER returned to her humble lodgings in Black Lion Square the same afternoon, consoling herself with the reflection she had worked very effectually on the great nobleman's mind; but he being of a changeable nature she preferred to let the information regarding his wife take deeper root before arranging any fresh plans.

A curious woman this nurse Slater judging from appearances; she was attired in a black silk skirt, which trailed behind her as she walked, and owing to the dust and dirt of the London streets had changed to a muddy brown; she was usually known by a small red shawl which she wore round her shoulders in all weathers; she was a tall woman and prodigiously stout, approaching the sixties, much addicted to quiet whiskey-drinking, apt to fall asleep at meal times with three double chins reposing on the broad and handsome breast.

She walked quicker than usual to-day. This late remorse of Lord Jasper Fitzmaurice regarding his wife and daughter would very likely be the means of putting plenty of money into nurse Slater's pocket, and she was so delightfully cheerful on this account she almost sang aloud portions of the liveliest music-hall ditties in her repertoire as she took deep draughts from her black whiskey-bottle.

She passed along sermonising at times to the dirty little boys playing at marbles in the alleys and courts. She handed a halfpenny to a crossing-sweeper—a very rare action of charity on her part. But she now felt Lord Jasper would readily embrace any opportunity of being intro-

duced to his daughter, of whose existence Mrs. Slater already knew a good deal. It was a dark, square, ugly house at which Mrs. Slater paused, the stucco tumbling from the porch, and a few miserable-looking children playing about the area railings. They looked frightened as the landlady approached, and ran away, waiting at the corner of the street till she disappeared.

Mrs. Slater was not obliged to importune the knocker, but pulling out a large latch-key from her capacious pocket drove it into the keyhole, and it was really remarkable how completely her whole manner and address were changed.

She seemed to have vulgarity in every feature. This may or may not have been the effects of the whiskey. Mrs. Slater was the owner of the lodging-house, and threw up her head several inches higher in lofty pride as she called out to a certain Mrs. Barney Macree who inhabited the cellar kitchen:

"Now why don't you keep your children from prowling about the area steps? it takes away from the respectability of the house, and I've warned you a month ago me and my son would not have it."

"Shure, ma'm, child'en will be child'en, and I 'as nussin' baby 'ere can't be allays on the watch," called out the dilapidated Celt from below.

"Then take your notice, Mrs. Macree, you don't suit," said the amiable Mrs. Slater, depositing her whiskey bottle on the table, and throwing herself into a large armchair. "I can't stand impudence, Mrs. Macree, and what with your husband's goings on—always over at the 'Dog and Whistle' making a beast of himself, and you and your children, the place is perfectly unbearable."

She spoke with a certain amount of grammatical correctness, altogether mysterious in a woman of so gross and coarse a bearing, and she screamed this dismissal over the railing leading to the cellar kitchen in tones loud enough to be heard the other side of the road. It ended in Mrs. Barney Macree rushing into her landlady's parlour and begging for mercy.

"Turn us out, ma'am; faith it's a cruel thing entirely," answered the voluble Irish woman; "and I'm as poorly as can be, and Barney out o' work."

"Here, mother," cried another voice from the hall, "get rid of these little disturbances in the house, can't you, it's perfectly sickening?"

"Rid of us is it ye mane? ye brute!" cried Mrs. Slater, rushing towards the man who now sauntered towards Mrs. Slater, his hands to his ears.

"That woman's voice will drive me mad, it will indeed. I never could stand discords. Send her about her business, can't you?"

Mrs. Slater rose majestically.

"You hear, woman, my son orders you away?"

"Yer son, is he? Deed, an' a darker villain I niver cam' across; bad luck to all the boys of ould Ireland if any of 'em can talk like the dandified rascal."

"Shoulder her off, mother, pray do," the man cried, lifting his head, "and get me some soda water. I've a deuced blue fit coming on, and let's have peace at any price, if," laughing, "we can't just now get much else."

Mrs. Barney Macree, finding she was to be expelled by force, retired with anything but benediction on her lips.

"These lodgers! Oh, they're enough to drive one crazy. Mother, try and get rid of the lot."

Mrs. Slater, uncorking the soda water, begged to remind him of his various needs.

"You know, my dear, you've always lived so well, and you will have your little bit of curried fish, and your omelettes, and your soda and brandy. How can I make both ends meet if I don't?"

"We needn't steal, mother, in this age. We can just order things and never pay for them."

"Perhaps you've tried thieving and found it don't pay," she answered, drily.

The man rose and shook himself.

"Never was a man so unlucky; never was there a man with such a voice and head compelled to be sneaking about the ugly quarters

of Black Lion Square in old gloves and boots, because he blundered most egregiously."

"They have an ugly name for forgery, my son, here in England," Mrs. Slater said, unsympathetically; "besides, you're dead and buried, my dear. The sham fight has told remarkably well, and the little bunch of violets gave the last touch of pathos to the affair."

He laughed. How handsome he still was—dark blue eyes, deep and velvety in their lustre and cruelty, but a sick despondency in every movement oppressed him; graceful and languid as a panther of the desert, and with a mild defiance in look and word impossible to describe the splendid Evelyn evidently appeared down in his luck.

He was tall and broad shouldered, but what was this hard evil look on his face that must have made a physiognomist prophesy ill of Evelyn Carlton. Conscientiousness was an organ not to be found on his brain.

"Poor old Vichy; he was our buffo. By Jove, he entered into the game with a will. When I found all was up and the police were on the track, I lost no time in effacing myself once more, and here I am sneaking about you and eating you up, ma mère. A nice end for a man who has made his ten thousand a year, and supped with princes."

"To say nothing of princesses," added Mrs. Slater, still drily.

"Exactly; but we won't mention them just at present."

"But we must mention them. We want to live."

"Yes, yes. Has the sapient Jasper shown signs of relenting lately? I think if you've no objection, mother, I'll have a smoke."

And he took out an elaborately carved cigar case, struck a match, and lighted a cigar, his feet reposing on the maternal mantel-piece.

"He's so much moved by remorse that after carefully broaching the subject again to his lordship, I think we might venture to introduce Eustacia to his paternal notice."

"But she believes she is my daughter."

"All the better, because we can work in the dark and keep everything to ourselves. He actually said to-day he was anxious to provide for her."

"Stars and stripes!" cried the elastic Evelyn; "here's my luck again turning up. I was just going to be plaintive over my misery."

"Don't holloa till you're out of the wood, my son, we're very poor, remember. Don't you think it might be safe for you to sing twice a week at a music hall—disguised quite safely, no one would recognise you—so as to bring in the dubs?"

"At a music hall!" cried the disgusted "Genaro;" "if you suggest such a thing I'll half throttle you! I've had a good many loves in my life—women, oh, yes, and wine ditto, and horses ditto, and cards ditto too—but there's one thing, mother, I've loved above all, and this was my art."

His face kindled into new beauty as he spoke, though it darkened with rage.

"And when you talk of a music hall to me, I'm nearer throwing myself over Waterloo Bridge than you're perhaps aware of."

"He will destroy himself!" Mrs. Slater cried, as if speculating on possibilities, pouring out a fresh supply of soda water. "Come, try a drop of whiskey in it, love."

"What sacrilege. No, thanks."

"And did you never save up a nice little sum out of all your grand salaries, my son, to put by for a rainy day?"

Evelyn appeared to enjoy this as a fine joke.

"You ask a fashionable tenor this? No, I lived. My extravagance added to my glory—Lucifer with a little blue flame and so on around him; but what a descent! heaven and earth, what a change! a clothes line in the back yard, a curtainless window; I, too, who hate a daylight glare. Horrid little he-bears and she-bears of children screaming something about 'Obadiah.' If this isn't enough to drive me to my grave, what is?"

"You will have to govern Eustacia with a tighter hand."

Evelyn looked surprised.

"Blows won't pay there. She's got a certain pride of race about her, and so she ought, considering who her parents were, and I'm quite certain, mother, if you goad her too unpleasantly she'll bid us farewell before we're aware of it."

"It was a pity you didn't stick to the mother, Evelyn, she inherited a little yearly sum."

"Discords again," he answered; "a thing I detest. I commence to study some new part, and her ladyship is in hysterics. A pupil—the Duchess Allecompane—calls, and her ladyship's jealousy invokes a perfect battery of adjectives. I sing 'Fernando,' one of my best parts, on the stage, and she believes Leonora is ready to elope with me; consequently screams and faints in the stalls. I remonstrate with Camelia. Pretty name, isn't it?—I hope the smoke is not obnoxious—and her reproaches spoil the smoothness of my scales. I shut her up in a room in order to master a complicated study of *forturi* by myself, and the misguided woman picks up my revolver and blows her brains out."

He knocked the ashes from his cigar, and throwing it aside, coolly lighted another.

"Nevertheless you will never master Eustacia," said his mother. "That warning look we know of old comes into her face at times and makes us obliged to be careful."

"Here she is," cried Evelyn, starting up; "wonderfully handsome girl too. If she had only been gifted with a voice I'd have made her work."

Mrs. Slater met Eustacia outside in the hall. It was indeed a grand and resolute face. She might have sat for Iphigenia, sacrificed to the furious gods, and yet resolutely defying an evil destiny. There was daring, will and passion in Eustacia's features; her hair was dark, but not so dark as the large, dreamy, almond-shaped eyes; the nostrils were thin and exquisitely cut; the lips full and firm as those of Venus. Looking at her one might wonder whether good or evil must predominate in this nature, so passionate and Greek in its tense warmth and reckless fervour.

"Come, Stacey, hand us those nice slices of cut tongue you've been buying," said Evelyn, whose appetite appeared improved by the smoke; "I want my lunch."

"I've only been teaching this morning," said Eustacia, throwing aside her gloves. She wore a simple cashmere dress and velvet hat; her hair was blown about her forehead by the sharp east wind, and she shivered, glancing at the empty fireplace.

"You ungrateful girl to forget your poor father," said Evelyn, resigned to some cold collared-head and pickles.

A languid yet bright defiance shone in her smile.

"I've had tickets given me to-night for the theatre, and Count Mancelli wishes me to accompany himself and sister."

"Are you going?" asked Evelyn, starting at the count's name.

"Of course; it will be delightful."

"Eustacia thinks so much of pleasure," said Mrs. Slater, malignantly. "Never wonders how we are to be amused."

"You've plenty of resources," said Eustacia, pointing to the whiskey; "that is your boon companion."

"Just hear her. Don't I wish I could shake the seven senses out of her. Oh! not at all!" said Mrs. Slater, glancing at Evelyn.

"As you used to," assented Eustacia. "Better not try that game on again."

"Did Mancelli allude to me?" said Evelyn, cautiously.

"If he knew who you were," said Eustacia, in her mocking way, "why, you would be forced to pay a visit a long way off, and ride in the Queen's carriage quite free of charge."

The old sick weariness in his expression returned.

"I must indeed have fallen low, for this girl to taunt me," he muttered. "I must make a

move, and when suspicion is lulled to rest I'll wing my flight to America."

Eustacia now retired to dress for the theatre, and soon re-appeared before them wearing a pale turquoise blue silk, trimmed with plush and chenille of a brighter shade. Over the sleeves was a network of pearls, and pearls drooping over her arms contrasted with the pure ivory whiteness of her bust and throat.

So lovely was she in this toilette, that Evelyn Carlton, watching her entrance, uttered an exclamation of surprise and admiration. This silk dress had been a present from him in his past days of glory, and he sighed bitterly as he kissed Eustacia on the forehead.

"Who does she resemble now, mother?" he asked, falling back a few steps and shading his eyes.

Mrs. Slater knew, but she only nodded her head slightly.

"When Lord Jasper sees this vision," she whispered in his ear, "always provided his remorse is enduring, there will be little difficulty in persuading him Eustacia is his missing child."

Evelyn smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"The great difficulty will be in inducing Eustacia to be introduced as the individual," he answered, slowly. "You have been too harsh, you know, with the girl; you ought to have tried and won her love. It's that pride of race that's been too much for you."

"Here is Count Mancelli," said Eustacia, taking up her cloak and going to the window. "Don't you think, all things considered, papa, you had better retire?"

Evelyn shivered.

"Why don't you marry him? he's rich enough for you, isn't he?"

"Simply because he has never asked me, and hasn't the least intention of doing so."

Evelyn in the meantime had disappeared into the lower regions, and nearly upset Mrs. Macree's large washing-basket in the rapidity of his movements.

The count was a tall, handsome man about five-and-forty—a perfect gentleman and profound scholar. He had visited at one of the houses where Eustacia taught music, and had since taken the deepest interest in her welfare.

He longed to show her a new and more brilliant kind of life—to let her see Florence, and breathe the high artistic atmosphere of fine Italian society, where the greatest refinement and culture may be found; where the women are graceful and splendid, with eyes the like of which no other nation can boast, and where music, poetry, and all the civilising influences of art are more keenly appreciated than in any other city.

He left his sister in the carriage while he sought Eustacia; her sweetness and modesty made her universally popular.

"Mrs. Slater expressed her opinion of the carriage and horses in very strong English."

"You always did get people to make a pet of you, you little vixen!" she said sweetly. "There, get along with you, do."

Eustacia waved her hand in reply, and stepped into the count's carriage with the air of a duchess.

Evelyn down below, seated on Mrs. Macree's washing-tub turned upside down, looking through the blinds saw Eustacia's brief salute.

"She's Camelia to the very life," he muttered.

"No, sir," muttered Mrs. Macree, "sure the dear young lady had the prettiest roses in her 'and I ever did see."

"Hold your tongue; I wasn't speaking to you," he said.

"Is it to ould me tongue thin ye mane?" responded his enemy. "Bad luck to ye on me tub," and as she spoke the article in question rolled over and Evelyn with it.

The popular tenor looked very black as he rose to his feet, and returning upstairs swallowed a good half tumbler of his mamma's best whiskey, and then fell asleep on the horsehair couch.

As Eustacia and her two companions entered the stalls, Lord Jasper, accompanied by his son,

Lady Emmeline and her daughter Maude, passed through the corridors and took possession of a box in the first circle.

Lord Jasper's eyes were rivetted on the features of the beautiful girl in her arial dress of blue and pearls in the stalls, and these steady glances were not passed unnoticed by his son.

When the curtain fell on the first act and Eustacia raised her eyes to his, oppressed with his long scrutiny, a spasm passed over Lord Jasper's features, and clutching at the white drapery of the box before him, he fell fainting to the ground with the delirious cry:

"My wife! my wife!"

(To be Continued.)

THE LITTLE CHAIRS IN OUR HOMES.

When day, with its trials and burdens,
Has passed, and the calm eventide
Brings the toilers, one by one, homeward

To the rest of the quiet fireside—
If one joy can outvie all the pleasures
Love's pilgrimage ever has known,
It must be when the evening fire
Shineth
On little chairs close to our own.

For what is Fame's triumph and glory
To the touch of a soft, rosy hand?
What are worldly defeats and disasters
To the trust of the dear household
band?
Head and hand crown and sceptre may
covet;
But the heart craveth love for its
guest;
And the heart that can bask in love's
sunlight
Finds every day sweetest and best.

With the toddler's wee feet on the
fender,
And the little chairs close to our
own,
We covet no rank and no kingdom,
And envy no king on his throne:
Too soon children hear the world calling,
And from home-ties eagerly stray;
But, whatever our loss in the future,
Our children are with us to-day.

And when the years ripen their harvests,
And life's fields are whitened with
snow,
The firelight each eve will still
brighten
These little chairs all in a row;
We shall fancy we hear the gay
laughter,
And list for the feet on the stairs,
If only our lone eyes are resting
On these cherished, these dear little
chairs. L. A. U.

BOOKS.—Every young person should obtain, as soon as possible, a restricted, serviceable, and steadily—however slowly—increasing series of books for use through life; making the little library, of all the furniture in the room, the most studied and decorative piece.

The Duke of Connaught, who commands the first battalion of the Rifle Brigade, volunteered for Zululand. He went down to the Queen and pleaded hard to be allowed to temporarily delay the worship of Venus in favour of that of Mars, and he succeeded in persuading the Queen to let him go out, provided the high personages on the other side of the marriage contract would consent. The Red Prince, it is said, was anxious to permit the young Duke to go, but the lady would not hear of it at all. Venus triumphed over Mars.



FRANK BERTRAM'S WIFE;

OR,

Love at First Sight.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"That Young Person," "Why She Forsook Him," "Strong Temptation," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XIX.

TWO TRUE HEARTS.

No, the heart that has truly loved ne'er 'll forget,
But as truly love on to the close.
As the sunflower turns on her god, when he sees
The same look which she turn'd when he rose.

WHEN Beatrice Grey came to herself she was lying on the little sofa in her own drawing-room with Frank Bertram bending over her. His dark eyes were full of a set purpose. Many would have called his face stern, yet no woman's voice could have been gentler than his as he asked:

"Are you better?"

The flood of memory almost overpowered Beatrice as that afternoon's events came back to her. What must he think of her? She looked at him appealingly. She could read nothing in his face.

"Are you better?" he repeated, softly.

"Yes, Mr. Bertram. How can I thank you?"

"We will not talk of that yet," he answered, with his own peculiar smile. "Tell me, why do you receive strangers alone? Where is Mrs. Stone, and why does she not protect you from such visitors?"

"Mrs. Stone is out," answered Beatrice, determined to confide her troubles to her friend. "She is going to leave me very soon, so I must learn not to depend too much on her."

[THE WORLD WELL LOST.]

"Going to leave you! Why, I heard nothing of it all the time you were in the country."

"It was only settled yesterday. A great deal has happened since you were here," with a faint smile. "I am going to give up this house."

"What has changed your plans?" eagerly.

"Mr. Ashley is dead," her voice quivered. "I don't think I ever spoke to you about him. He was the truest friend I ever had. Whatever success has come to me I owe it all to him. He had been ill for weeks, but no one seemed to think he was in danger till the news came, and then I knew my engagement at the New Theatre was over."

"But the advertisements are out. A great many seats are already booked (a private box for himself among them). Little as I know of things theatrical, I believe the arrangements made must be carried out."

"Yes," returned Beatrice, "but by some strange chance my engagement is not signed. While Mr. Ashley lived I never should have gone to another theatre, and our arrangements were never very business-like. I was engaged until 'Mona Grame' was withdrawn. The new contract for the coming season was drawn up, but not signed."

"And who is the present manager of the New Theatre?"

"The man you saw here," she shuddered. "He is Mr. Ashley's brother, but oh, so unlike him in mind and character. He came here to-day with the contract in his pocket. He wanted me to sign it."

"And that was why I found you a prisoner in your own house?"

"Yes. I think he fancied that I should give in from fear of a scene. He had been here nearly two hours when you came."

"And Mrs. Stone?"

"She was out."

"I should have sent for assistance."

"One of my servants is away. There was only the girl who let you in, and she is very stupid and easily frightened."

"You were frightened."

"Yes; I believe in instinctive fears. From the moment I was introduced to Percy Ashley I have dreaded him. You will laugh at me, but I feel within my heart the certainty that he will bring me sorrow."

"Have you known him long?" asked Frank, who remembered the look on Percy's face when he had forced himself into the room.

"Nearly two years."

"And you have never liked him?"

"Never."

"Has he ever annoyed you before?"

Beatrice Grey flushed crimson. Frank understood.

"And you do not want to belong to his company?"

"I want never to see him again. That is what Mrs. Stone and I disagree about. She says if I give up my position at the New Theatre I may be for some time disengaged."

The servant came in then and lighted the gas and drew down the blinds. Frank showed no signs of going. Beatrice sat still on the sofa; her white hands locked nervously together; her violet eyes bright with excitement. Never had she looked more beautiful.

"I was so sorry to get your note," she said, when Jane had gone out. "I hope you found nothing very serious the matter at home."

"Nothing at all. My friend Stuart is down there, and he persuaded my mother I really ought to come and decide some question about a farm. When I got there and found everything well, I felt quite angry at having been summoned."

"Yet it is your home," returned Beatrice. "I thought people always loved their home?"

"Do you love yours?"

"Yes," looking round the familiar room; "I have spent some happy days here. I shall be sorry to go away."

"Where will you go?"

"I hardly know; nearer town, I fancy."

"And Mrs. Stone will not accompany you?"

"No. Mr. Bertram, you know what the poet

says of summer friends. I am afraid Mrs. Stone will not care much for me when I cease to be a favourite actress."

"But you only cease for a time?"

"Only for a time."

"Are you very fond of acting?"

"I love it dearly; probably because I have so little else to love, but I dread my next appearance strangely. I have been so successful, I have never had one failure, and now I feel as if my days of popularity were over, and the next character I played should be an utter fiasco."

"I wish you would leave the stage."

"Leave the stage?" she repeated, questioning— "leave the profession which helped me when I was most desolate, which has been more than friends and kindred to me! Leave the stage! Why, what should I have to think of? What should I have to do? Whom could I love? What could fill up the blank in my life? Do you think," she went on, appealingly, "that women cannot be good and true because they are on the stage? Do you think because they act for other people's amusement their private lives must be acted too? Do you think we have no hearts or feelings of our own? No natural character that is not half assumed?"

"No," answered Frank, gravely. "I think many actresses may be better, truer women than those who go to the theatre for their own pleasure, but I cannot like the life for anyone I care for. The perpetual excitement; the publicity; the company one is sometimes obliged to keep are all distasteful to me, and I am peculiar enough to think a woman's true place is at home."

"And if she has no home? I have no home."

Frank caught her two hands in his.

"Beatrice, will you give up fame for me? Will you be my wife and let us make a home together? I love you from my heart, Heaven only knows how well. Will you make this sacrifice for me? Will you give up your art and be satisfied with my deep love instead of public homage?"

"You cannot mean it," she said, turning her violet eyes so that they should not meet the steady gaze of his dark ones. "You cannot mean you care as much for me as that?"

"I care for you as much as this," replied Frank Bertram, hoarsely. "I don't value my own life if it is to be spent away from you. I love you better than anything else in the world. When I am with you I am happy; when I am away from you I feel a dull weight at my heart. I have never cared for a woman in my life before; it is my first and last love that I offer to you. Beatrice, won't you take it and give me yours in return?"

"I think," she answered, her hands still in his clasp, "that I have loved you ever since that morning in the train, only I never guessed it till now."

"Then you will be my wife?"

She shook her head.

"Remember what I am, an actress. You yourself have said you could not bear for anyone you liked to be that."

"And you do not love me well enough to give up your profession for me?"

"I do, indeed. My whole future I would rule according to your will, but how am I to alter my past? I am an actress; for two years I have appeared nightly as such; how can I change this? how am I to blot it out? Don't you see?" she went on, a strange sad weariness in her voice like one who sees the gates of Eden opening for her and may not enter, "what is done I cannot undo. People will not forget that I have been an actress; if I married you, in your wife they would recognise Beatrice Grey. What would your mother say? What would the Downshire matrons say? Do you think Mrs. Bertram would welcome as her daughter the leading actress of the New Theatre? Do you think your neighbours would care to visit the woman who has amused them at the price of seven-and-sixpence a head?"

"Beatrice, you are too hard."

"I am true," she said, bitterly, "only that.

I believe you love me just as you say. I know that I have given you my whole heart, and what good can come of it? We must part. I shall lose you even as a friend."

"You are cruel to us both."

"I think not. You are used to an easy life, to be popular and courted, how could you bear a wife destined to raise the question, 'Ought we to visit her?' It would end in your repenting our marriage. I could not bear that; I would rather give you up now."

"Beatrice, my darling, think of the long years stretching out before us, will you wreck them all? My love, my darling, be more merciful to yourself and me."

The tears stole down her cheeks. Her whole heart had been given to this man. She had just awoke to the consciousness of this and now she must send him away.

"It is true, isn't it? Downshire would look coldly on me and on you for my sake. The day you married me would be the bitterest in your mother's life. If I overrate social prejudice, tell me; you should know society's dictum better than I. Ah, you cannot answer me."

"Beatrice," said Frank Bertram, looking into her eyes as though he would read her very soul. "I cannot deny what you say, but yet I will not give you up. You shall not send me away. My darling, there is a way by which we may be happy together, and no one cast a cold word at us, if you love me well enough to pursue it."

"I love you well enough to do anything that will not bring you sorrow," answered the actress, simply.

"Then be my wife at once. Let us be married in some old city church without bridesmaids or decorations, and then, my darling, I will take you abroad. I will show you all that is worth seeing in every continental city."

"And then?" she asked, firmly, "and then?"

"And then when we are tired of wandering, when the world has left off wondering what has become of the beautiful Miss Grey, I will bring my lovely wife to England. All Devonshire shall welcome Mrs. Bertram, and my mother will receive her as a daughter."

Beatrice shook her head.

"Even then you would only be exchanging the question, 'Who is she?' for that of 'Who was she?' You might weary for your home when you were away from it."

"My Beatrice, will you believe that I value neither home nor mother, friends nor country in comparison with your love. If you love me, you cannot send me away hopeless."

"If only I were sure it was not wrong."

"Let me decide for you. When two people love each other, Beatrice, their first duty is to each other. Nothing in the world should separate two hearts."

Silence then deep and complete. He could hear the ticking of the gilt clock on the chimney-piece as he waited for her reply. He had released her hands; his eyes were on the ground. Until she had spoken he would say nothing more to urge her; it seemed an eternity to Frank before the little hand crept back into his and the trembling words came:

"Heaven help me if I am wronging you. I cannot send you away, because my life would be a wilderness without you."

He turned to her then, a great joy shining in his face, his dark eyes full of tenderness; he drew her close to him.

"My darling, never shall you repent your decision."

Her head fell on his shoulder, it had found its true resting place at last.

"What a little while I have known you," he said, after a long, long silence; "what a tiny space counting by weeks and days, and yet how much has happened in it. How little I thought when you got into the train that morning of all you were to be to me."

"It has seemed like a dream. Frank, was I very stupid; I could not think what made me so happy."

"And you are happy, Beatrice?"

In words she did not answer him, but she gave him one sweet, strange smile, and Frank

was satisfied. He bent his head and kissed her, not once, but many times, as though he loved to feel that his lips and hers had a right to meet.

They said nothing then of the future, the present was too full of that purest passion called first love. That he had gained his will was enough for Frank. That her whole life was to be spent with him contented Beatrice. For her the future meant him, and that was all sufficient.

She never thought of what she must resign—her art, her fame, her popularity. He never thought of his mother; his fine old home; his grand name; that first hour of their engagement was one of perfect joy.

Not till they had parted did Beatrice remember with a strange chill that even in their happiness they had no sympathy; she could pour out her love-story to no confiding friend. Frank could seek no kindly congratulations. In all the world they stood alone henceforward save for each other.

CHAPTER XX.

MARRIED.

All love is sweet,
Given or returned—common as light is love,
And its familiar voice wearies not ever.

THE next day was Sunday, but the morning seemed to bring little of Sabbath stillness and repose to Myrtle Villa. The chaperone who had returned late on the previous evening full of curiosity to know how Percy Ashley's visit had prospered, had been confronted by Beatrice face to face.

"I know all," said the actress. "Mr. Ashley has endeavoured to use you as a tool. I already told you we had better part. You will not be surprised that I should ask you to make that parting a speedy one."

"I can't go now," retorted the widow, sharply, "it's too late. For all your airs and graces you may be sorry one day you didn't take my advice and keep your position while it was yours to keep."

Beatrice smiled, she could not help it, she was so happy in thinking of the position she was to fill, one infinitely dearer to her than that of leading actress at the New Theatre. Mrs. Stone took the smile as a personal affront.

"When do you wish me to go?" she asked, stiffly. "I believe you're obliged to keep me the full month after you gave me notice."

"That can hardly be," answered Beatrice, calmly, "for I shall not remain here a month longer myself. Our arrangement, Mrs. Stone, was that we could part at any time by my paying you a quarter's salary. I hope you will be able to leave on Monday, the cheque will be ready for you then."

It cost her something thus to dismiss the woman who had drunk of her cup and sat at her board for so many months; the relations between Mrs. Stone and Beatrice had been peculiarly harmonious; the widow had made herself agreeable in order to retain a post-the-duties of which were almost a sinecure, and the young actress had mistaken interested kindness for genuine affection.

She was undecieved now, and she could part from Mrs. Stone without regret; but had the chaperone been all Miss Grey once thought her she would equally have received her congé, only it would have been a gentler one. Beatrice fully understood the sacrifice Frank Bertram had proposed to her; she was to be his wife, but he did not wish to own he had married an actress. Beatrice Grey must disappear from public life before the young Mrs. Bertram was heard of; a gulf must divide the two, and no one who had been intimate with one must know the other. Beatrice quite understood, and in the depths of her love, the intensity of her devotion, the sacrifice seemed as nothing to her.

She did not go out all day on Sunday, her mind was too full for her to go to church, and she never went anywhere else on that day. There was a strange devotional element about the actress; if she had lived in earlier times

and been bred a Roman Catholic she would have been devout, perhaps have taken the veil, as it was she had a religion all her own, she delighted in all the gorgeous ritual of the advanced church; she believed implicitly in God and Heaven, but of all theological controversy she was ignorant as a little child.

The day seemed very long and tedious to her; Mrs. Stone was effusively low spirited when they met at meals, and spent the rest of the time in packing for to-morrow's journey. Beatrice had a great deal of leisure for thought, but all she seemed able to realise was that she had given her whole future into another's keeping.

She wondered what his mother would say when she heard; that she must hear it some day the girl knew full well; it seemed to Beatrice she should love anything that belonged to Frank; perhaps his mother would feel the same and really treat her as a daughter; then she gave a sigh to the memory of the little sister who would so have so sympathised with her happiness.

"Dear little Muriel," thought Beatrice, "if only she had lived how she would have admired Frank. The child would have been almost eighteen now, old enough to think of lovers of her own."

Mrs. Stone came down on Monday in her travelling dress.

"I am sure, Beatrice, no one can regret your headstrongness more than I do; even now at the eleventh hour I would consent to stay with you if you saw your error."

"Thank you," returned Miss Grey, drily. "I do not see my error; moreover, Mrs. Stone, I see no prospect of my obtaining another engagement, so I shall not need a chaperone."

She pressed the cheque into the widow's outstretched hand, and did not refuse her own in token of farewell, but when Mrs. Stone put up her veil in anticipation of a warmer leavetaking Beatrice turned away coldly.

"Good-bye. I hope you will have a pleasant journey. I will be sure to forward any letters that may come for you."

She went down to the gate to see the cab drive away, till it was out of sight. Mrs. Stone's head appeared at the window waving her adieux, but the smile on the widow's lips was not a pleasant one. Beatrice had made a second enemy that morning. All unwitting it she ran lightly indoors to dress for her lover.

I suppose every girl who loves a man unconsciously tries to make herself beautiful in his sight. Beatrice Grey was beautiful without effort, and yet she paid special attention to her toilet that morning when she was to see Frank Bertram for the first time since she had promised to be his wife. Her long soft hair looked like threads of silk as she coiled it round her shapely head. Her dress was of fine black cashmere, long and flowing. She tied a scarlet ribbon at her throat, and fastened a bunch of violets in her waistband. She wore no ornament, not even a brooch or a locket, and no ring glittered on her long white fingers. Strangely lovely, and in spite of her chequered life, strangely youthful, too, she looked for her four and twenty years as she went downstairs.

She did not wait long; soon the knock she knew well came, and eagerly she rose. If Frank Bertram had repented—if his prudence had got in the least the better of his love she must have seen it, but she did not see it. Frank had not spoken to her on impulse, but after weeks of conflicting feelings he had told her the simple truth, and he would never change. He came in now as one who had a right to come; a fond, proud light in his eyes, a pleased smile on his lips; and she—her whole soul shone in her face: it was loving, trusting, appealing and confident. As he pressed her in his arms, Frank Bertram never thought of her beauty, he thought of her.

"You have not repented, Beatrice?" he asked her presently, when they two sat side by side on the sofa.

She looked at him reproachfully.

"I shall never change, Frank. I am yours while you wish it."

He took a ring off his own finger, a large flashing diamond; an heirloom for many generations in his family.

"You must wear this, Beatrice, till I can get you another fit to replace it. Darling, when may I put a plain gold ring on this little hand?"

She did not answer his question. She looked down at the splendid gem he held in his hand.

"I wish you had not taken it off, Frank. I always admired it so on your finger."

"And I admire it here," he said, as he slipped it on to hers. "It is too large for you, Beatrice."

"When I choose another I must remember what tiny hands you have."

"Who gave it you?" she asked, shyly. "Was it your mother's?"

"No; the ring was my father's. He died when I was quite a boy. I think sometimes if he had lived I might have turned out better."

Beatrice looked at him admiringly. Clearly in her eyes he needed to be no better.

"You have not answered my question, love. When will you give yourself to me? Don't make me wait too long, my darling. You and I both stand alone, surely that is a reason for hastening on the time when we shall be one."

Beatrice bent her face down as though to admire the ring.

"Think how little you know of me, Frank. I may not be all you think me."

"I shall have my whole life to know more of you. I want to begin the knowledge soon, your reasons make against you, darling."

"You said on Saturday that no one must know."

"I think that is better," rather doubtfully, as a man who does not quite believe his own words; "we two shall be happy enough together. It will be time enough afterwards to take the world into our confidence. You are not afraid of being dull?"

"Oh, no."

"Then give me the right soon to take what care of you heart and life can to protect you from every foe. Beatrice, there is nothing to wait for. When will you give yourself to me?"

"When I was a child," said Beatrice, "I used to say I would be married in summer time, because there were so many flowers."

"You shall have the flowers, darling, but I cannot wait for my wife till summer time. The weather is growing cold and bleak; let me take you away soon and we will spend the winter in Italy."

She yielded, perhaps she felt that loving each other as they did what need was there to delay their union. Frank had his own way; he fixed the wedding for a day in November some three weeks distant, this would give Beatrice time to leave Myrtle Villa and make a few simple preparations.

"It will be a strange wedding," said Frank, presently. "Beatrice, are you sure you don't mind dispensing with the cake and bridesmaids?"

She smiled outright.

"I'm afraid I should be sorely puzzled where to look for bridesmaids, Frank, I am sure I don't know four young ladies in the world."

The days flew after that; it was the strangest engagement ever known; both were perfectly free, both their own master and mistress, yet it was a secret engagement, so very secret that on either side there was no confidant; they spent a great deal of their time together, and discussed their future often; there were no secrets between them save that Beatrice never mentioned to him the mystery that overhung her father's fate, nor that she and her sister had borne the name of Lestrange.

Mr. Ashley had converted Beatrice to his own opinion that her father was dead. The girl had grown to believe it as a certainty; had she had the vaguest suspicion her father might yet be living, nothing would have induced her to listen to Frank Bertram's suit. A fortnight after the engagement she left Kilburn, turning her back with many regrets on the pretty home she had loved so well. The greater part of her luggage

was sent on to Dover. The tradespeople at Kilburn and the proprietor of Myrtle Villa were told she intended to travel in England, and all letters were to be sent to her agent, who would know her address; in time to come, when the New Theatre opened and her name was not in the bills, the agent was overwhelmed with letters containing offers of engagements, and with personal inquiries his answer never varied: Miss Grey had called on him when she left Kilburn and promised to send him her address as soon as she knew it perfectly. She had never done so and he had no idea of her whereabouts.

The affair created quite a sensation; young, beautiful, and popular, she disappeared in the zenith of her fame, and the public eagerly demanded where she was gone. No answer came, and at last after a nine days' wonder the excitement subsided, and the affair was forgotten, only when Percy Ashley endeavoured to revive the drama of "Mona Grame," it was such a failure that he was compelled to withdraw it after six performances.

And Beatrice, where was she?

She went straight from Fulham to some quiet, irreproachable apartments at Camberwell; for one week she lived there, receiving no visitors and giving such little trouble that the landlady coveted her as a permanent lodger. She went to town very often, and many parcels accompanied her home; she received many letters but no one ever called on her; she told the landlady when she left her she was going on a long journey, so that functionary was not disturbed at the amount of packing which was done. At last one morning, the last of her stay there, Beatrice came down very early in her walking clothes.

"Would you send for a cab, please, Mrs. Bolo?"

"Surely you won't leave without breakfast, miss?"

"Yes, please," smiling. "I shall breakfast in town. Will you let me have the bill?"

She paid it; rewarded the servant liberally, and went away, and from that day to this the "pretty young lady" has been a source of wonder in those dull lodgings.

Beatrice only drove as far as the "Elephant and Castle" in her cab. She dismissed it there, walked on a few yards, and there chartered another. She had started very early, so it was not nearly ten o'clock when her second conveyance drew up at Ludgate Hill Station. Frank Bertram was there waiting for her. It was a whole week since they had met. In the view of a long absence abroad Mr. Bertram had been obliged to go down to the Knoll; he meant to have returned sooner but several things had conspired to detain him.

"My darling," he said to Beatrice, "how can I thank you for all you are giving up?"

"I think," she whispered, blushing, "this is nicer than a regular wedding. People who have grand weddings are obliged to think about their friends and how things will go off. You and I need only think of each other."

He felt very proud of her. She looked so beautiful in her plain costume of dark blue velvet and hat to match. How thoroughly unlike a bridal party looked those two—he in plain morning dress, without even a white tie, and she hopelessly destitute of the orthodox white silk and orange blossoms. She did not even carry a bouquet. That, like the bridesmaids and cake, had been sacrificed.

"I should like to walk," she said, simply, in reply to one of his questions; "it is a beautiful day and we have not far to go."

No. Their journey was a short one, for the church—an old stone edifice, grim with the dust of centuries, and gloomy and sombre as so many London churches are—lay within a quarter of an hour's walk. Beatrice trembled slightly as they walked up the aisle. The church was perfectly empty save for the old vergers.

The clergyman did not keep them waiting; he soon joined them. A handsome, refined looking man, young enough to feel an interest in the romance enacted under his eyes. He had seen Mr. Bertram before, when he called to

make arrangements, but he had expected a different sort of bride.

The rector had fancied he should see a timid, shrinking schoolgirl, instead of a woman, beautiful with all the glory of her womanhood. To his credit, be it said, he performed the service beautifully.

Had the church been thronged, and the marriage an ultra fashionable one, he could have done no more. The words of the service sounded full and clear, not one but had all its meaning, while Frank Bertram made his responses boldly and confidently, and Beatrice pronounced hers in the same thrilling tones which had so often moved the audience of the New Theatre.

Only when the play came where the grim old verger had to play her father's part she trembled a little, but she had regained her composure after the final benediction was spoken; they filed into the vestry then to sign the registry, an old pew-opener appearing as a second witness.

When she and the verger departed, and Beatrice was replacing her glove, the rector said a few words of good wishes, it seemed to him so infinitely dreary for the new made wife to have no friend to bid her joy. Mr. Bertram thanked him simply, and then led his wife away. Mr. Allen wondered not a little as he took off his surplice.

"A mystery there, I should say. They look perfectly well matched. Plenty of money on both sides, I fancy. Why couldn't they be married like other people? What glorious eyes the girl had. Beatrice Grey; where have I heard that name before?"

(To be Continued.)

PAUSE BEFORE SPEAKING.

YOUNG men, do not speak lightly of woman's virtue. There is nothing in which young men are so thoroughly mistaken as in the low estimate they form of the integrity of women. Not of their own mothers and sisters, but of others, who, they forget, are somebody else's mothers and sisters. As a rule, no person who surrenders to this debasing habit is to be trusted with an enterprise requiring integrity of character. Plain words should be spoken on the subject, for the evil is a general one and deep rooted. If young men are sometimes thrown into the society of thoughtless and depraved women, they have no more right to measure all other women by what they see of these than they have to estimate the character of honest and respectable citizens by the developments of crime in our police courts.

Let our young men remember that their chief happiness in life depends on utter faith in women. No worldly wisdom, no misanthropic philosophy, no generalisation, can weaken truth. It stands like the record of itself—for it is nothing less than this—and should put an everlasting seal upon lips that are wont to speak lightly of women.

A LITTLE WILD, BUT THINKS HE COULD REFORM.

A YOUNG man is very much in love with a girl: not an uncommon thing, and very natural. Her father is resolutely opposed to the match. This is not so remarkable as to invite comment, of itself. Fathers and daughters do not always see alike, and history teaches us that such differences of opinion are not peculiar to modern times.

Of course, the young man in this case thinks the opposition of the girl's father is unreasonable, as other young men, in other like cases, have thought. Sometimes they have been right in such an opinion. We do not think this young man is, for reasons which we will briefly set forth. After extolling, in a long letter,

his own virtues and respectable parentage, he says:

"I drink a little, and am known as rather wild; but think I can quit all of that if I can only get the young lady."

Now we place a very different estimate upon the character of this young man, as a whole, from that which he puts upon himself. He admits that he has habits which ought to be reformed if he is to be married. We will concede that in his belief and expectation that he can and will reform them he is sincere and confident. But suppose his belief and expectation should prove erroneous—as like hopes have proved in thousands of similar instances—does he consider how terrible will be the disappointment of this confiding girl? And is he willing to consign her to such a fate? Is he willing that she should take such a risk?

We confess that in our judgment that risk is very great. We are bound to go farther, and to say that we have no confidence whatever in the young man's permanent reform. He admits himself that his reformation depends upon his getting this girl. Whether he will abandon his bad habits or adhere to them is to be governed by circumstances. This is a fatal concession. It destroys all groundwork for confidence in him. It is like a declaration that he will not steal if he can be supplied with everything he desires—if he is never in want, and never tempted!

To-day he will solace himself with strong drink if he cannot obtain the hand of a certain young woman. To-morrow he may find some other excuse equally satisfactory to his own mind. To-day it is disappointment in love. To-morrow it may be disappointment in business. So long as he concedes that his abstaining depends upon continuous prosperity and success, it is safe to say that in the great vicissitudes incident to human existence he is morally certain to find frequent occasions for lapses from his good but qualified and feeble resolution.

The father who would willingly entrust the happiness of his daughter to a young man so halting and irresolute in his purposes would make himself a party to her certain future misery—a thing which is not optional with him, but which he has no right to do.

The young man who comes stumbling and faltering to ask a girl to be his bride deserves to receive from both father and daughter the answer, No.

THE TROUBLES OF A POET.

WHILE our editor was sitting in his office one day recently a man whose brow was clothed with thunder entered. Piercingly seizing a chair, he slammed his hat on the table, hurled his umbrella on the floor, and sat down.

"Are you the editor?"

"Yes."

"Can you read writing?"

"Of course."

"Read that, then," he said, thrusting forward an envelope with an inscription on it.

"B——" said our editor, trying to spell it.

"That's not a B; it's an S," said the man.

"S? Oh, yes, I see! Well, the words look a little like 'Salt for Dinner,' or 'Souls of Sinners.'"

"No, sir," replied the man, "nothing of the kind. That's my name—Sam'l H. Brunner. I knew you couldn't read. I called to see you about that poem of mine you printed the other day, on the 'Surcease of Sorrow.'"

"I don't remember it," said our editor.

"Of course you don't, because it went into the paper under the infamous title of 'Smearcase To-morrow.'"

"A stupid blunder of the compositor, I suppose."

"Yes, sir, and that is what I want to see you for. The way that poem was mutilated was simply scandalous. I haven't slept a night since. It exposed me to derision. People think I am an ass. Let me show you."

"Go ahead," said our editor.

"The first line, when I wrote it, read in this manner:

"Lying by a weeping willow, underneath a gentle slope."

That is beautiful, poetic, affecting. Now, how did your vile sheet present it to the public? There it is. Look at that. Made it read this way:

"Lying to a weeping widow, to induce her to elope."

Weeping widow, mind you! A widow! This is too much; it's enough to drive a man half crazy."

"I'm sorry, but——"

"But look a-here at the fourth verse," said the poet; "that's worse, yet. What I said was:

"Cast thy pearls before the swine, and lose them in the dirt."

I wrote that out clearly and distinctly, in a plain, round hand. Now, what does your compositor do? Does he catch the sense of that beautiful sentiment? Does it sink into his soul? No, sir! He sets it up in this fashion:

"Cart thy pills before the sunrise, and love them if they hurt."

Now, isn't that a cold-blooded outrage on a man's feelings? I'll leave it to you if it isn't," said the poet.

"It's hard, that's a fact."

"And then take the fifth verse. In the original manuscript it said, plain as daylight:

"Take away the jingling money; it is only glittering dross."

A man with only one eye, and a cataract over that, could have read the words correctly. But your pirate upstairs there—do you know what he did? He made it read:

"Take away the jeering monkeys, on a sorely glandered hoss!"

By George! I felt like braining him with a shovel! I was never so out up in my life."

"It was natural, too," said our editor.

"There, for instance, was the sixth verse. I wrote:

"I am weary with the tossing of the ocean as it heaves."

It is a lovely line, too; but imagine my horror and the anguish of my family when I opened your paper and saw the line transformed into:

"I am wearing out my trousers till they're open at the knees."

That is a little too much! That seems to me like carrying the thing an inch or two too far. I think I have a constitutional right to murder that compositor; don't you?"

"I think you have."

"Let me read you one more verse. I wrote:

"I swell the flying echoes as they roam among the hills, And I feel my soul awoken to the ecstasy that thrills."

Now, what do you suppose your miserable out-cast turned that into? Why, into this:

"I smell the frying shoes as they roast along the hills, And I peel my sole mistaken to the ecstasy that whirls."

Gibberish, sir, awful gibberish! I must slay that man! Where is he?"

"He is out just now," said our editor. "Come in to-morrow."

"I will," said the poet, "and I will come armed."

Then he put on his hat, shouldered his umbrella, and drifted off downstairs.

THE WARDROBE.

To people of limited means the care of clothing is a very important matter. It makes a great difference in the looks and wear of a hat or coat whether it is thrown on the lounge or chair when taken off, or carefully hung up. The expense of two men's clothing is often nearly one-half in difference—mainly as we think because one of them will always hang up his clothes carefully, while the other's may be found anywhere when they can be found at all. Properly brushing and cleaning clothes, and mending them as soon as required rather than waiting until the thread ravel out, or the tear has grown too large to be neatly repaired, add greatly to their durability.

AFGHANS.

The Afghans have a perfect horror of water, and never bring it in contact with their bodies. Being Mohammedans they are bound to do certain ablutions by their faith, but they find substitutes which are allowed instead of the water. There is one tribe who are said to get three new garments only in their lifetime, the garment being in each case a blanket. The first is given at birth, the second when they are married, and the third when they die. Each blanket is understood to have been ceaselessly worn till events entitle the wearer to a new one. Clean clothes and the washing of them are not entirely unknown in Afghanistan, for they have a term by which they imply a gentleman, and it is characteristic. They call him a "Suffaid Posh," which means white, or in this case clean dress.

FRINGED WITH FIRE.

By the Author of "Bound to the Trail," "The Golden Bowl," "Poor Loo," etc.

CHAPTER XXII.

BY THE RIVER.

Ah, they give their faith too oft
To the careless wooer;
Maidens hearts are always soft
Would that men's were truer.

BRYANT.

THE six months for which Dick Duster was condemned to hard labour for his cruelty towards poor Joeko have passed, and this day he is free. There are no friends waiting outside to meet him as he leaves the prison, and only terror as to what he might do in her absence has induced his mother, Chatty, to stay at home to work to-day.

Not that there is much in the house to steal, for the small cottage by the side of the river can only boast of two rooms, and these are as barely and as plainly furnished as any very poor person's house could be, for Chatty Duster was much too shrewd a woman to spend her money in buying furniture for her son to sell or destroy at his own sweet will, or on fine clothes that he could also lay hands upon and sell when he was too idle to work for his own bread, neither did she put temptation in his way by leaving any of her earnings within his reach.

By her double trade of dressmaking and fortune-telling Chatty managed to get hold of a good bit of money, but she always carefully deposited it in a savings bank, and neither her son nor her daughter knew what she did with it, or had the remotest idea about how much she really possessed.

As she was always pleading poverty, however, and thus by exciting the sympathy of the ladies for whom she worked, became the recipient of much of their cast-off clothing, Dick shrewdly argued that dress could not cost his mother anything worth speaking of, and, as her food was given her at the places where she worked, this again could not swallow up much of her earnings, while the rent of the cottage was only four pounds a year, and half of this he had himself

paid until he was provided by the State with lodgings gratis.

He was reckoning up what it must cost his mother to live, wondering how much she made a week, and speculating as to how much her savings must amount to, as with close-cropped hair and with a hang-dog, villainous expression of countenance he left the gaol, crossed the river to more easily avoid meeting people who might know him, and made his way to what had once been his home.

Once, I say, for six months is a long lapse of time, and during this period he had not received a visit from a single relation or friend, or a line from anyone in answer to his own letters.

"The old 'un may be dead," he muttered, as he slouched along. "If she is, I wonder what she's done with her brass. Mercy don't have it all. I'll let her know that, if I swing for it," and his face assumed even a darker scowl than was usual to it.

He had nearly reached the cottage that stood with three others a few paces from the river's brink when he saw a female figure coming towards him.

It was not his mother; this woman was too young and too short for her. She was dressed, also, like a lady, and the man's heart gave a bound and the blood coursed madly through his veins as he recognised Clara Cousins.

For such a wretch as this to lift his eyes to Clara, who was so pretty and gentle and good, was a piece of audacity and impudence such as few would have given Dick Duster credit for; but such was the case: the sight of her had a singular effect upon him, while, to see her with another man whom she might seem to prefer was always enough to send him half out of his mind with rage and jealousy.

Clara was alone this morning, however, and she was walking slowly and pensively, a shade of care and sadness upon her face, such as it had not worn six months ago.

She was thinking with a heavy heart of Charles Rentroll and wondering when the mysterious barrier between them would be removed, and she would have passed the man who had rather the appearance of a tramp than of a gardener without looking at him, had he not summoned up courage to stand in her way, and touching his cap while he blocked the path said:

"I beg pardon, miss."

Clara looked up, uttered a low cry and started back a pace or two, but she recovered her self-possession almost instantly and she said, coolly:

"You startled me; what is it?"

"You don't remember me, miss?"

"Yes I do," in a tone that irritated the unreasoning brute almost beyond endurance. "You used to work in our garden, sometimes, and your mother Mrs. Duster often works for me; what do you want?"

"I've been in prison, miss."

"Yes I know, for almost killing a poor little monkey," in a tone which clearly implied "You won't get any sympathy from me."

"Then you think I deserved it, miss? Six months I've had; six months of hard labour, and of as little food as they could keep body and soul together upon. You think I deserved it?" eagerly.

"Really I have never thought about it," replied Clara, who was getting somewhat alarmed; "but I suppose you didn't stop me here to discuss your deserts, did you?"

This in a tone of hauteur; for besides being a little frightened she was also becoming irritated.

"No, miss, I was going to ask if your father will give me some work to do as he used to before this happened."

"I am sure I can't tell you what papa will do," proudly, for he had never moved from her path, and without stepping aside she could not proceed on her way.

"But if you was to ask him, miss, then maybe he'd take me back."

"I shall do nothing of the kind," angrily, "and now let me pass," and she threw back her head and looked at him imperiously.

He never moved, though his face wore an expression that would have frightened her had not there been people within call.

"I s'pose I may look at you a bit, mayn't I?" he next said, in an aggrieved tone that would have sounded comic but that his face and demeanour looked more suggestive of tragedy and of deeds of violence than of anything likely to inspire mirth. "I ain't looked at nortso pretty since I were caged," he added.

Clara shrugged her shoulders, the compliment was lost upon her, and she was anxious to get home, so she stepped aside, meaning to pass the man who impeded her way.

"You're in a mighty hurry to get away, Miss Clara," said Dick, taking a step also, and again barring her progress. "I've done nothing but think of you all this long time, and I suppose you ain't given me a thought," in a sentimental tone, and with a horrid leer on his face.

"If you don't let me pass at once I'll report your insolence to my father, and you'll soon find yourself back again where you have just come from," returned Clara, hotly. "Are you going to stand out of my way, or shall I call for help?" vehemently.

"Just say you're glad to see me back again, Clara, just say it, for I love you better than anybody else will ever love you, and I'll take good care that nobody else ever has you," he said, with a deep oath.

"I won't! I am sorry you are free, and I hate the sight of you," passionately. "Ah!" and her face lighted up with an expression of intense relief as she caught sight of a man approaching them from the direction of the town.

Dick Duster turned to ascertain the cause of her exclamation, and he muttered an oath as he recognised young Templar, the son of one of the principal solicitors in Worcester; then, without another word he walked off in the direction of his mother's cottage, while Clara, with flashing eyes, heightened colour, and excited manner, now made haste to meet the man whom usually she did her utmost to avoid.

"Oh, Mr. Templar, I'm so glad to see you," she exclaimed eagerly. "I have been so frightened."

Then she told her story, and the lawyer wanted at once to follow the man.

"No, don't think of such a thing, he is a desperate fellow. His mother is my dressmaker, and she is frightened to death of him. It is a pity that such violent characters cannot be locked up as madmen are. They are quite as dangerous, I'm sure."

"He will be locked up safely enough for a time," returned the young man, "if you will make a charge against him for his conduct to you, though it wouldn't be very pleasant."

"Oh, no! I couldn't think of such a thing; but I am quite safe now thank you, Mr. Templar, and I need not spoil your walk."

"You know, Clara that my greatest happiness is to be by your side," he returned, somewhat sentimentally, it is true, but with deep earnestness.

Clara made no reply. Had Horace Templar sought her before Charles Rentroll made her acquaintance and won her heart, her fate might have been widely different, but it was too late: Her heart was filled with the image of one man who was unworthy of the place he occupied, and the other, who was true and devoted to her, met but with coldness and repulsion.

Horace Templar, however, had one thing in his favour—Dr. Cousins approved of his suit, had given his consent to the match, and Clara's heart was all there was to win.

It is true she had persistently replied that she did not love Horace, and that she would not marry him; but as, at the same time, on being sternly questioned by her father, she had been equally positive in declaring there was no one she did care for, her refusal had been regarded as mere caprice, and the younger man had been exhorted by his elders to have patience.

So matters stood when Dick Duster came out of prison, and by his presence managed to complicate matters that might otherwise have drifted on for years in the condition in which he found them.

Despite her assurance that she was quite safe, and her evident desire to get rid of him, Horace Templar accompanied Clara to her father's house, accepted her by no means cordial invitation to enter, and fell in at once with her father's suggestion that he should stay and breakfast with them, for it was now only about nine o'clock.

"Whatever took you out so early, Clara?" asked her father when Horace had, to the girl's annoyance, explained how he had met her.

"I went for a walk, papa; it was such a lovely morning," was the reply.

"And you were going for a walk also, Horace?" asked the physician.

"Yes; we are not busy just now, and even when we are I usually try to get an early stroll," was the reply.

"Then you had better take your morning strolls with Clara," said her father, with a laugh; "though this is the first time I have heard of her getting about so early."

"I shall be delighted. I'll call to-morrow morning."

"It isn't worth while," replied the girl, her face flushing hotly; "I don't suppose I shall go out to-morrow. I don't go every day; it is only sometimes I have a fancy for doing so."

"I shall call on the chance of your having the fancy," returned the young man, gallantly.

Soon after this he took his leave, and after he was gone Clara had to listen to her father's eulogium upon him; the suitability of the match, and some of the many reasons for her not throwing away a good man's love and the position and wealth and comfort he was able to offer her. To all of which Clara listened as though she were in a dream. She had heard it all before; she knew it all as well as her father did, but she was anxious to get away; was burning with impatience to open and read the letter she carried in her pocket, and that had been the cause of her early morning's walk, for Charles Rentroll's letters were always posted to "C. C., care of Mrs. Duster, 1, Reed Cottages, River Lane, Worcester," and it was to get hold of this precious epistle that she had several times of late called upon Chatty soon after the postman had gone his first morning's round. The suspense is over at last, and Clara is safely locked in her own room, and now with beating heart and trembling fingers she breaks the seal.

"My dear little girl," it begins.

He always addresses her like this, and though she has once or twice objected, he still persists, for it is such a safe way of beginning a letter, as though the very fact of writing at all were not as compromising as any words he could use under the circumstances.

For Charles Rentroll, like many other men, had a great tendency to follow the example of the ostrich, and when he had hidden his head, fondly delude himself with the notion that his whole body was invisible.

With this beginning, the letter went on in the same strain, and might have been written to a child of ten if one did not read between the lines, and know, as Clara knew, that the meaning of some of the expressions was veiled by using words and metaphors which a third person would not readily understand.

Three months ago Clara might have been satisfied with this, now she felt that the caution and secrecy adopted were a reproach to herself; there was something also in the tone of the letter that dissatisfied her, and that threw out in marked contrast Horace Templar's frank, straightforward wooing. She remembered to the remark that Florence had made, or rather the question she had asked, as to whether or not this mysterious lover already had a wife, and Clara, being no fool, but only a love sick girl, began to reason with herself and wonder that she had taken so much upon trust, and had been so blindly yielding and obedient to this man's imperious will.

I am afraid that Clara's first rebellious thoughts against her secret lover had been occasioned by the very sharp, nay, even cruel letter which he had written to her in reply to

her entreaty that she might take Florence Edgecombe into her confidence.

The girl had shed many bitter tears over that letter, but she obeyed the command contained in it, and where a more spirited woman like Florence would have cast off such a yoke, no matter what the effort cost her, Clara bowed beneath it, though it galled her cruelly for all that.

And Charles Rentroll had not been to Worcester since that time—at least he told Clara so—and he implied that the cause of his continued absence was that he was not well pleased with her; and the girl was angry as well as grieved in consequence.

Thinking the knowledge that he had a rival might do him good, Clara, who detailed in her letters most of the small events that helped to fill up her daily life, told him of Horace Templar's offer and his devotion, and to her intense grief and mortification, received back by return of post a half bantering epistle in which she was advised to accept the young solicitor without loss of time.

All of these things had helped to irritate the girl and make her unhappy, but Dick Duster's behaviour this morning, and Mr. Templar's promise, at her father's suggestion, that he would call for her when he went for his early walk, convinced her that some fresh arrangement must be made with regard to the receipt of her letters, and also she was beginning to feel that sooner or later, if Horace persisted in his suit, she would have to tell her father about this man for whom she was waiting.

Something of this was apparent in her next letter to Rentroll, though she did not say she meant to speak to her father, but the feeling that it was the proper thing to do was very clearly expressed, and the man who received it bit the ends of his black Dundreary whiskers savagely, as he muttered aloud.

"The little idiot! I'll end it. The question is, shall I go or write? I don't want a scene, it is true, but then writing is so dangerous, and she might show the letter to Florence, or to her father, or she might start off to see me; one never knows what a frantic woman will do in her folly. What an idiot I was to get into such a scrape, and what have I gained by it? Idiot that I have been! But I will get it over once for all; she can take the other fellow or leave him just as she pleases, but she shall not be a tie on me any longer, and I must see Florence, I can't keep away from her. Yes, I'll go, and I'll write and tell Clara I'm coming."

He did write a letter, one that with all his caution he had cause to regret having penned for the rest of his life. It was brief and cold, and ran as follows:

"DEAR CHILD.—We must have a change. I will meet you at the old place by the river, on Thursday night, at eight o'clock. Don't fail; burn this as of course you have burnt all before it."
CHARLES.

He addressed this to the care of Mrs. Duster as he had done his other letters, being too cautious to follow Clara's suggestion that he should send it to her at her own home, and Chatty herself brought it to the girl on the plea that she had some question to ask connected with dressmaking.

Clara thanked the woman, gave her a trifle for her trouble and loss of time, and then sat down as patiently as she could to listen to Chatty Duster's complaints about her son.

"I don't know what I shall do with him," she said, in evident distress; "he's a hundred times worse than he was before he went to prison, and he's always at me for money, and swears he knows I've got a heap somewhere, which of course I haven't, and he's been to Mr. Edgecombe's and have made up such a fuss about his monkey, refusing to take any money they offer for it, and he's got the poor little wretch back again, and I don't doubt but he'll kill it. Oh, 'twas a black day for me—a black day indeed when he was born."

"If he hurts the monkey, I hope he will be hung for it!" exclaimed Clara, with energy, while her eyes flashed with indignation; "I'm

almost sorry now," she went on, "that I did not let Mr. Templar have him up before the magistrate for his conduct to me the other morning."

"To you, miss?"

And Chatty's face became paler than the girl had ever seen it before.

"Yes."

And Clara repeated what had taken place.

"Don't meet him again if you can help it, miss, and if you see him coming towards you at any time, be sure you run away. I've heard him mutter things about you in his dreams when he's fell asleep by the fire of an evening. Oh, I wish you was going away somewhere, or that he was, I do. I saw something bad for you in the cards last night."

"There, Chatty, don't try to frighten me; I don't suppose I shall see him unless he comes in my way, and I have usually somebody with me," with a pout; "but I want to read my letter. Good-bye, Chatty."

Then the woman went away, and Clara read the heartless words without detecting the purpose that lay behind them.

"He is coming," was the thought that filled her heart; "coming to see me. All will be right when we meet. He may send me cold letters, but he cannot be cold when he sees me, and looks into my eyes and feels how I love him. Thursday night; that is to-morrow; it's rather dark by the river at eight o'clock. Chatty forgets that it is October instead of June; but I shall go, of course, only I must make some excuse for doing so. I'll go and see Florence Edgecombe in the afternoon and leave Jasmine Cottage about seven, then I can stroll about and cross by the ferry. Yes, that is what I will do."

Then instead of burning the letter as she had been enjoined to do, she put it with many others she had received from the same writer in a little sandal-wood box, which she kept in a locked drawer, safe from the prying eyes of her aunt.

Ah! if Charles Rentroll could have seen how his cautiously worded epistles were treasured, he would have ground his teeth and have gladly given as many bank notes for them as he had sent letters.

He is now leaving London to keep his appointment. A day before the time named, it is true, but he wants to see Florence Edgecombe, and he means, as soon as his interview with Clara is over to leave Worcester the same night, and to make sure of seeing both girls, he must call at Jasmine Cottage before he goes to keep his tiresome tryst by the riverside.

CHAPTER XXIII.

INTO THE DARK NIGHT.

He waits with hellish rancour imminent
To intercept thy way or send thee back
Despoil'd of innocence, of faith, of bliss.

"How do you do, Clara? I am so glad to see you."

And Florence Edgecombe bent down and kissed the cheek of her friend.

"Quite well, thank you, dear," replied Clara, brightly, while her face flushed, though her cheeks had become thin of late; "but how are you? You have not been ill, have you?"

"No, but I am not feeling very bright," and Florence sighed wearily.

"What is the matter with you?" was the anxious inquiry; "your eyes are quite sunken, and you look as though you had been sitting up every night for the past week."

"I have not been doing that; but to begin with papa is far from well. He won't keep his bed, and he won't have a doctor; and he rather frightens me sometimes; he wanders in his talk so, and it seems as though there was something wrong with his brain; and my uncle William is not well either. I ought to go to town and nurse him, but papa is not in a fit condition to be left with only a servant to take care of him."

"That is perplexing. You have great expectations from your uncle, haven't you?"

"I am his nearest relative, and he is rich," replied Florence, evasively; "but it is not for what he may leave me that I want to go to him. He was my mother's only brother, and I am very fond of him; he has been very kind to us, too, though papa won't admit it; we owe our present income entirely to him."

"You are in a difficulty, and I don't see how anyone can help you out of it," said Clara; "but how about your 'beloved,' hasn't he been to see you all this time?"

"No," reluctantly; "I don't know what has come over Arthur. He writes often enough, but there is a tone in his letters that I don't like. I feel convinced that my aunt has been trying to make mischief between us, and it is so difficult to break through a feeling of restraint or to dissipate a misunderstanding by letters. One spoken word or a look, if I could meet him, would be enough, and indeed I am so miserable sometimes, I am almost tempted to send for him."

"Why don't you? I should, if I were you."

"It seems so weak and childish," with a faint laugh, in which there seemed to be more pain than merriment; "but I think I am getting childish," she went on, almost hysterically. "Do you know I cried over poor little Jocko as though he had been a child when that horrid wretch, Dick Duster, came and took him away. It put me in such a rage too, my blood boils even now when I think of it. You know we are far from rich, but I offered the wretch five pounds to leave the poor little brute with me, and he wouldn't. I have warned him, however, that if he is cruel to the monkey, I'll have him punished for it, and I will."

"How excited you get about a dumb animal, Florence," remarked Clara.

"Just because it is a dumb animal," was the response; "if the creature could speak and defend itself, the thing would not worry me half as much. But that is not the last of my grievances."

"Indeed; what more has happened?"

"Our servant, Mercy, has informed me that she is going to leave me if we stay in Worcester. She professes to be frightened of her brother, who is a terror to all belonging to him. But I don't think fear of the brother is the only cause. One of the grooms at Wardour Hall is a sweetheart of hers, and I fancy she is thinking of getting married."

"Well, you can easily get another girl in her place; I have often wondered you put up with her."

"I shan't get another like Mercy Duster; I am very fond of Mercy, troublesome as she is; but I shall be giving you the blues with listening to my troubles. I'll just take a look at papa, and if he doesn't want me we'll go for a walk, unless you would prefer sitting at the bottom of the garden close by the river."

"I think I should," said Clara, who did not wish to tire herself before the evening.

"Very well, then we will have some tea, and papa can come to us when he feels inclined."

Then Florence gave her orders to Mercy, spoke a few words to her father, and joined her friend, who had strolled to the bottom of the garden, and was standing dreamily looking at the swiftly flowing river as her feet.

Ah, if she could but have known the dark secret that river would one day have to tell, she would scarcely have stood there now and smiled upon it so calmly.

It was early in October, but the air was as warm and balmy as though the year were two months younger than it really was, and the two girls, as they sat in their garden chairs, with a rustic table between them, on which stood a tray with some cups and saucers for tea, made a pretty picture from the opposite bank of the river, while the wide spreading branches of a tree shaded them from the sun.

Presently Mr. Edgecombe came out, and Clara was struck by the change that had come over him, for it was not that he looked very ill or infirm, but his eyes wandered restlessly; he seemed nervous and irritable, and would begin abruptly to talk upon irrelevant subjects without any aim or purpose in anything he said.

"I believe he will either go mad or have a dreadful illness," Clara thought, as she looked at him.

But she gave no expression to her opinion. On the contrary, she talked brightly and cheerfully, and Mr. Edgecombe, with whom she was a favourite, seemed to become more calm and rational than he had been for some days past.

Clara was sitting with her face towards the river, her back to the house; her companions were also looking in the same direction, and thus it was that they did not observe a man coming down the garden towards them, or see Mercy Duster standing in the doorway with her hand extended in the same attitude in which she had directed the visitor, and it was therefore with a start that they all turned when Charles Rentroll's voice said:

"Good-afternoon, Florence."

Clara started as though she had been shot; her face became red and white by turns. Florence noticed her friend's agitation, though she herself flushed with annoyance, and Mr. Edgecombe was the only member of the party who, if glad to see the newcomer, showed it by cordiality of manner.

The first shock of surprise, mingled with a sharp feeling of pain, once over, Clara tried to appear calm, friendly, and unconcerned, though she was longing to be able to talk alone to the man whom she loved so faithfully and so blindly.

He evidently feared that she might say something that would betray the relationship between them, for he kept away from her side, avoided looking at her when he knew that her eyes were fixed upon him, and was so very anxious to keep Florence from suspecting that more than the merest acquaintanceship existed between Clara and himself, that he over-acted his part, and raised an odd suspicion in her mind, that was confirmed rather than dissipated by her friend's evident irritation.

"How long have you been in Worcester?" asked Mr. Edgecombe.

"I only arrived to-day," was the reply.

"You will be staying some time, I suppose, now you are here?" was the next remark.

"No, I go off again to-morrow," was the answer, "so I thought I would drop in and see you for half an hour to-day."

"That is right; I wish you would come oftener. I wish you and Florence would make it up again. Wardour never comes; what is the use of a man who is always away? I know you want her, you told me so. Flo—"

"Papa!" exclaimed Florence, angrily; "I wish you would think of what you are saying, and to whom you are speaking."

And she rose to her feet, her proud, handsome face flushed with indignation, and her queenly figure drawn up to its full height.

"What, my dear? Ah, I see," with a glance at Clara; "another time—another time."

"It is getting cold," said his daughter, anxious to change the scene and the subject of conversation. "You had better come into the house, papa, or you will get a chill."

Mr. Edgecombe assented, admitting he was becoming cold, and the party made their way into the house.

"Come and take your hat off, you'll stay the evening with us?" said Florence to her friend.

"No, thank you, I cannot; I mustn't be late," replied Clara, glancing anxiously in the direction of Rentroll.

But he made no response, and when a few minutes later Mr. Edgecombe, with a sublime disregard for household arrangements, invited him to stay to dinner he at once accepted.

"Then I shall not let you go, Clara," said Florence, who was determined that Charles Rentroll should not speak to her alone, as he had evidently come with the intention of doing; "if you are afraid of being scolded," she added, "Mercy and I will walk down with you, and I will explain to your aunt that the fault of your being late was not yours, but mine."

"Oh, there is no need for that," said Clara; "but I must not be late in any case."

Then she went to take off her hat and make such slight preparations as she could for dinner,

while Florence went to give fresh orders to Mercy.

Finding herself alone, Clara sat down dejectedly, with her hands clasped loosely on her lap, while a look of dazed misery came into her face.

"Can it be possible?" she moaned; "has he loved her? Is it of him that she spoke that day? Surely it cannot be, and yet his looks, and tone, and manner, the old man's words, her marked avoidance of him. If it should be as I suspect what a mad, blind idiot I have been. But I will not ask her till I have heard what he has to say. Ah!"

A footstep upon the stairs warned her that Florence was coming up to join her, and poor Clara started to her feet, pulled off her hat and gloves, and pretended to be very busy arranging her hair when the former entered the room.

"I can't imagine why Mr. Rentroll comes here so often," remarked Florence, petulantly, as she seated herself in a chair. "It's a nuisance for a man to come to dinner without being previously invited, and more than that, I don't like him."

"He seems willing enough to like you," Clara could not help saying, with a note of bitterness in her voice.

"Yes, just because he knows he can't get me," returned the other, scornfully; "if he could have me I should be worthless in his eyes. A woman had better hang herself to begin with than trust to Charles Rentroll's faith. But don't let us talk of him, it makes me bitter and cynical when I remember that such men as he are tolerated, and even welcomed by good and virtuous women."

"Why do you know anything very dreadful about him?" Clara could not help asking.

"Nothing that the world would call dreadful; but there is papa calling, let us go down," and they went.

It was not a very pleasant evening, this last that Clara would ever spend at Jasmine Cottage, it almost seemed as though coming events were casting their shadows before them, for a depressing gloom that could not be shaken off settled upon the whole party.

Clara was angry and jealous, and was becoming reckless enough to throw aside the mask of secrecy she had worn so long, and had she received the least provocation she would undoubtedly have done so.

But Charles Rentroll did not attempt to pay Florence more than the ordinary civilities due to the hostess, indeed he was silent and moody, altogether unlike himself, and started more than once when a remark was addressed to him as though he were lost in some train of thought that was far more absorbing than pleasant.

"Really, Mr. Rentroll, you couldn't look more frightened if a policeman were to tap you on the arm and claim you as his prisoner," remarked Florence, disdainfully, as she saw that the dish of vegetables Mercy Duster was offering him was nearly thrown out of the girl's hands through his extraordinary pre-occupation and nervousness.

The guest laughed uneasily. It was the only way in which such a remark could be taken; but there was no bright or witty conversation to lighten the meal, and almost as soon as it was finished Mr. Edgecombe began to nod, and his daughter only just managed to get him to a couch before he fell into a deep sleep.

While she was doing it Clara seized the opportunity to whisper to Rentroll:

"I shall propose going away directly. You can offer to see me home; it will save either of us waiting by the river in the dark, and I am afraid of meeting that Dick Duster when I am alone."

"The man to whom the monkey belongs?"

"Yes."

"What a little brute it was. I still have the mark on my hand where he bit me," and he held out his right hand, on the fourth finger of which gleamed a large diamond, while on the fleshy part of the thumb was a scar where Jocko's teeth had fixed themselves; and that for safety had afterwards been cauterised.



[A DANGEROUS ACQUAINTANCE.]

"Yes, it is ugly; but aren't you glad to see me, Charlie?"

"Hush, Florence is coming; I was just asking Miss Cousins to give us some music," he said, unblushingly, as the girl whose favour he wished to win came away from her father.

"I can't sing to-night," said Clara, who felt at the moment as though she had a great lump in her throat, "and I think, Florence, I will go home if you will excuse me. But I needn't take you out, it isn't late you know. It is only just eight o'clock."

"I will see you to your door if you will allow me, Miss Cousins," said Rentroll, gravely.

Clara bowed.

It was all such a farce—such a pitiful farce—she scarcely knew whether to laugh outright or be very angry at having to play such an ignoble part in it.

She was right, it was a farce, the small piece upon the stage of this night's performances that should precede the tragedy.

So Clara resumed her hat and jacket and kissed Florence more warmly and impressively than usual, the latter thought, then she went out side by side with Charles Rentroll into the dark night.

For a few seconds Florence stood watching their retreating figures, then she closed the door with an odd feeling of desolation, as though something warm and bright and pleasant had gone out of her life.

She chid herself with being fanciful and for giving way to morbid imagination, but she could not dissipate the feeling, and then the suspicion that had been forcing itself upon her mind for the last three hours returned. She was sure, or almost sure, that Charles Rentroll and Clara's secret lover were one and the same person.

"If it is so I hope he will marry her," she thought; "but he won't; I know him too well for that; he will treat her even worse than he treated me, and she may not be so well able to bear it."

Then she sat down for a time; her father woke up, drank his cup of coffee, smoked his long Oriental pipe, and at ten o'clock the household of three, including Mercy Duster, were about to retire to rest, when there was a peculiar noise at the front door, and after a momentary hesitation Florence opened it. She started back with a cry of terror, for some strange creature sprang into her arms, and it was not for a second or two that she realised that it was her pet Jocko the monkey.

The poor little animal seemed to be in a greatly excited condition; it jabbered; it whimpered; it showed its bleeding head, and it held up in its paws and tried now and again to tear with its teeth a piece of coloured flannel such as some men wear for shirts.

"'Tis a piece of Dick's shirt, and they've had a fight," said Mercy, taking the shreds from the monkey's grasp. "I know the pattern of it well; 'tis a pity it won't hang him; the world would be the gainer."

"He is a cruel, unmanly wretch, but don't forget he is your brother, Mercy."

Then Jocko was soothed and fed. His old cage was got out, a bed was made up in it; the door of his gilded prison was securely locked, and he was left in the warm kitchen to sleep once more in security and comfort. This was not the last strange occurrence at the Edgecombe's cottage that night, however.

It must have been about one in the morning, and the inmates had been asleep for at least a couple of hours when Florence was aroused by a violent knocking at the door. Again and again the imperious demand for admission was repeated, and at length the girl sprang out of bed, pulled on a dressing-gown, and threw up the window which commanded the front of the house.

"Who is it? What do you want?" she asked.

"Is my daughter here, Miss Edgecombe?"

"Dr. Cousins!" exclaimed the girl. "No; she went home at eight o'clock."

"She has never returned home. I have been

waiting up for her. I was told she had come here. Can you give me any idea of where she is gone?"

"No; but I will come down directly." And she did so.

She could give the anxious father no information, however, beyond the fact that Clara had left the house escorted by Mr. Rentroll, who said he would see her to her own door.

"And where is this man staying? Who is he, and where can I find him?" was the next impatient question.

"He said he was going back to town to-night," was the blank reply. Then she gave the anxious doctor the names of the hotels in Worcester, Malvern and London, at which she had heard Rentroll had been staying at various times.

Dr. Cousins' face was pale and troubled, and he was about to take his leave, when he asked, suddenly:

"Had she any secret lover, do you know, Miss Edgecombe?"

"I believe she had," reluctantly; "but I don't know who he was; she would never tell me."

"And you cannot guess?"

"I should scarcely like to say that I could; it is a mere suspicion."

"Was it this Mr. Charles Rentroll, do you think?"

"I don't know; it may have been. At any rate she left this house in his company to-night."

Many more questions followed in quick succession, and Dr. Cousins discovered that Clara had but very rarely spent an evening at Jasmine Cottage, and also that Mr. Edgecombe had never once in his life escorted her home, but though he thus came upon the traces of a mystery he was no nearer the track of the girl whom he was seeking than when he left home, and he walked away anxious and sick at heart, none the less so because she whom he thus sought was only his daughter by adoption.

(To be Continued.)



[AN UNPLEASANT INTERRUPTION.]

CHRISTINE'S REVENGE;

OR,
O'HARA'S WIFE.

CHAPTER XXXII.

The world without love is a blank,
Empty of hope and joy.

THE Earl of Levison had been accustomed to the gratification of every wish and the realisation of every desire as it arose in his soul, and this lasted as long as he remembered being alive, up to the time of his first meeting with Elaine as a grown up girl, and then and there falling, in his own fashion, desperately in love with her. Then had come the first barrier to his eager desire to win her affections, and to receive her promise to become his wife. Her indifference had piqued his vanity; "roused the Evil One in him," as he elegantly phrased it; made him resolve that the young beauty should become his wife no matter what reason she had for withholding her love from him; and he suspected very strong reasons. He believed that beautiful Elaine had passed through some escapade, some schoolgirl romance in which she had for the time wrecked her peace of mind and made love for himself impossible. He had no very high standard of female purity; he only troubled himself with the question: How much of this secret of this girl's past can we hide from the world? How much can we hide if rumours get about? Money will most likely buy all the silence we require.

"When once she becomes my wife I shall know how to rule her. This little secret of the past which I shall hold will give me more complete sway and rule over her. She is the loveliest creature, the most perfect that the most fastidious judges could desire as a model of female grace, physical beauty and sylph-like

elegance, which will develop into a superb grandeur when she shall have been for a few years Countess of Levison."

All this while the earl had never made so wild a guess at truth as to suppose for one instant that Lady Elaine was married. He was away in Scotland when the news fell like a thunderbolt in the midst of that gay and great world which calls itself "society" that Lady Elaine Harwood, eldest daughter of the Earl of Donnamore, had actually married at the parish church of Hetly Heath, in Surrey, a Fenian peasant—a poor tenant on her father's estate of Donnamore. That the said Fenian was about to be tried for his life on the charge of being concerned in the murder of Foster, the earl's agent, and that the countess had shut up Elaine either in a lunatic asylum or in a convent (it was not distinctly stated which) for life.

Rumours reached him afterwards that Elaine had escaped, but he had not known whether or no to believe this tale. He frequently met the countess in "society;" but such perfect command of feature and voice—nay, of tell-tale blood and heart-stricken horror which shows itself in tell-tale pallor of cheek and lip—such control had the "marble woman" over the slightest manifestation of suffering that nobody could have supposed she had ever endured a single pang in the whole of her life.

The very name of Elaine was ignored. She was dead to her countess mother—dead as if she had lain close confined twelve feet under the sod—dead as if she were buried in the deepest depth of the fathomless sea, with the waves singing an eternal requiem over her bleached white bones for ever and for ever. Probably had the earl asked a question about Elaine of Lady Donnamore the "marble woman" would have given him a cold stare and have intimated that if their acquaintance was to remain on the old footing the name of the person he had alluded to must never be once mentioned in her presence.

The earl knew all this by the instinct of a rather clever man of the world and tolerably

correct reader of character. He knew that Elaine's husband had been found guiltless of murder, and had since died in the Middlesex Hospital. He had made up his mind to the gloomy certainty that he should never meet Elaine again, and then he had met her, more beautiful than before, with an atmosphere of purity and saint-like patience surrounding her, which his nature was too grovelling to comprehend, although he felt its influence, and now again the strongest desire of his life was that this divine woman whom suffering and sorrow had elevated into a saint, should become his wife.

He was satisfied that his splendid rank and colossal wealth would have power to frown down all impertinent comment, to stifle and hush every whisper of the gossips. His wife, Countess of Levison, daughter of the earl of Donnamore, not on terms with her family! Possibly not; the countess was a tyrannical personage in life; perhaps calls would be exchanged between the young Countess of Levison and her mother, the Countess of Donnamore, and then the dead Fenian would be quite forgotten, and Elaine would become the happy mother of an heir to an earldom and marquise.

All this programme for the future of himself and Lady Elaine in that great world where they would have to play their parts was arranged by the Earl of Levison, when there came a crushing blow—this discovery that Elaine had a son, a creature who would always be first with her; yes, even before that young marquis of the future, of whom the earl had already ventured to dream when he heard the murmur of coming years.

He knew Elaine had no passion for himself, that her pulse never quickened at his approach, that the colour never deepened on her cheek when he came suddenly into her presence. He knew this, but he had hoped to win her love in the future. Now it seemed that the cherub beyond there in the lodge-keeper's cot would always have Elaine's first thoughts, first cares, first love—ay, there was the bitterness of it.

True she had never really and truly loved the Fenian, but she adored his child with fervour, and the world would know it. Nothing would ever stop the tongues of the gossips as long as Elaine went constantly to visit that boy. As he grew up she would wish to give him the education of a gentleman, next her Surrey estate and a commission in the army. In all the years to come this Fenian's son would stand in his way as a rival, a thorn in his side to goad and sting him to madness. The Earl of Levison was selfish and ungenerous at heart.

"And so you say, Elaine, that at once and for ever you choose your Fenian's brat in preference to me?"

"My child is as a cherub sent from heaven to lead me to better things, to teach me to subdue self, to live for nobler aims than the pomp and pleasures of the world. My child is the light of my eyes, the joy of my heart, the hope of my future."

"As I thought, a rival before whom I, who would fain be your husband, I who would restore you to the pleasant refinements and delights of life which you have lost, I who would become your devoted friend, who would give you rank, honour, title, not to speak of the love which is consuming my heart—I shrink into nothingness."

"Lord Levison, I will never part from my child."

"You mean that if you ever condescend to become Countess of Levison, you will expect the Fenian's brat to be accepted in my household as your eldest hope—the child of your first romantic love-match before you married me for position and wealth? All my servants may point at me behind my back, and laugh at me for a fool, they will talk of the uncles and aunts, and the grandmothers of the little wretch, one of whom is a countess in Belgrave Square whose husband is in the Cabinet, while the other, as I have heard, is a mad old beggar. Woman, the Fenian who was so nearly hanged will never be forgotten so long as that wretched child lives."

"Do you wish me to kill him?" asked Elaine, with lofty scorn.

"Not to kill him; no, I wish you to put him into an institution with a few hundreds of pounds laid up for his benefit so as to set him up in some decent business when he is old enough, and I wish you to vow that you will never see him again."

"I refuse utterly and completely. I would not become an empress on such terms. No, not if I loved my husband to madness."

The earl grew pale.

"Thank you," he said, with a bitter smile, "the insinuation was well aimed. I am perfectly aware that you do not love me at all, that you despise me, and would only marry me for my title and wealth."

The passions of both were thoroughly aroused. Elaine, full of the exalted mother's love which makes a true woman court death and torture in the defence of her child. The earl, with his admiration for Elaine increased tenfold, jealous to madness of the child whose peasant origin was as a hideous crime in his eyes, saw that he had no place at all in Elaine's heart; he was ready to invoke the powers of darkness to aid him to win her for his wife, and to remove the detested rival babe from his path.

Lucifer and his fallen angels seemed to shadow him with their black wings—a legion of demons hissed their devilish suggestions in his ears. Neither the earl nor Elaine heard a foot-step close to them in the lane; neither of them saw Mrs. Pennithorn until, in a charming summer toilette, she stood between them in the shady lane pale and transformed with rage.

"Mrs. Anderson, you are not a fit person to have the charge of my daughters. You leave me to-day."

At that moment the Earl of Levison had no more respect for Mrs. Pennithorn or her feelings than he had pity for the overburdened donkey in the lane a little ahead of, where he stood, albeit that the said animal could hardly stir,

and strained pitifully in the endeavour to move the cart loaded with stones to which he was harnessed, while a cruel old man pulled brutally at his mouth.

No, the earl was in such a rage that he would rather have administered an extra vicious kick to the donkey instead of befriending it, and by the same rule the mortification of Mrs. Pennithorn excited in him no compunction, indeed he rather took a malicious pleasure in increasing her vexation. He took off his hat with all the graceful nonchalance of his class to the irate lady, and he said, calmly:

"I regret that Mrs. Anderson has excited your displeasure. Lay the blame upon me. I followed your governess into the lodge, and I have asked her to become my wife, and she refuses."

"Your wife, my lord—your wife?" Pretty Mrs. Pennithorn curled her lip contemptuously. "We understand what that means, my lord; indeed I am surprised at your daring to speak in that manner before me."

"I have entreated your governess to accept my hand and title to become Countess of Levison, and one day Marchioness of Carrig Ryan, and she refuses me."

The earl was deathly pale. Lady Elaine, reared from her cradle amongst the greatest titles of the land, accustomed to "lords and ladies" from her pinafore days, was not aware of the magnitude of this announcement, as seen from Mrs. Pennithorn's point of view.

"Do you mean this, my lord?" she asked, with lips that trembled in spite of herself.

"I mean it. Mrs. Anderson's family is equal to mine—older than mine. She is in every way except wealth my superior. I have accepted the hospitality of the Beeches, actuated by one single motive—the hope of seeing her, and inducing her to name a speedy day for our marriage."

The earl spoke in a cool, deliberate way; he knew that every word he uttered was a barbed arrow that wounded Mrs. Pennithorn and rankled in her heart. She had made a mistake; her fascinations were not as strong as she had deemed them, and could it be possible that this Mrs. Anderson had really won the heart of the young nobleman? Would she become a countess—the Countess of Levison? If so would she invite her to her parties—would she?

"I am sorry," she began, "that I spoke hastily. I—surely, Mrs. Anderson, you are not serious in refusing to become the Countess of Levison?"

"Yes, Mrs. Pennithorn, the earl exacts hard conditions, and I refuse."

"In other words, I required her to place her child with strangers, and she refuses. I dislike other people's children, and now, Mrs. Pennithorn, you know the whole story. You can publish it to the whole world if you like," he added, contemptuously.

"I shall publish nothing that you don't wish published; but surely, Mrs. Anderson, you will not hesitate," and she turned with a beaming smile to her governess, who might become a countess if she liked.

"No, I do not hesitate, Mrs. Pennithorn," Elaine answered, gravely. "I prefer my child to the whole world!"

The earl's white lips worked, and a serpent whispered of evil and deception in his ear.

"You see, Mrs. Pennithorn," he said, turning with a faint smile to the merchant's wife, "you see that things have come to a climax. Neither Mrs. Anderson nor myself had intended to choose you for our confidant, but now you know how things stand, you may as well know all. I will arrange that this child shall be placed where his mother can see him every week, that she shall always have access to him, that I will provide for his education and his future if she will become my wife. Are you witness to what I say?"

Mrs. Pennithorn bent her head, but Elaine shook hers.

"No, I must have my child in my house. If ever I have a house I will always acknowledge my child to the whole world. Nothing shall

induce me to live away from my child for a day if I ever have a home of my own."

"Then the child must come home to us?" said the earl, with a strange smile; "you have conquered, Elaine; I cannot live without you—"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

That child an angel is to her,
Pure, stainless, as the dove.
How beautiful the thoughts, the joys
That tend a mother's love.

Mrs. Pennithorn had all the instincts, if she had not always the tact, of a woman of the world. She saw that if she was not any longer to enjoy the reputation of leading an earl captive, that she might be reckoned among the gay and rich of Sydenham as a most important personage if the same earl married from the Beeches.

A quiet, very quiet wedding, but she and the dear countess, the closest friends and all kinds of intimacies between the Beeches and the great mansion in Park Lane in the future. It was finally settled that Elaine was to become Countess of Levison. She was to be married within a fortnight. The wedding breakfast was to be given at the Beeches.

There were to be present only the Pennithorns, and two of Mrs. Pennithorn's sisters, whom she invited up for the occasion from the country.

As for Elaine, the whirl and bustle and suddenness of the whole transaction, took away her breath as it were. She seemed like one who has hastily climbed a hill and stands panting at the summit, amazed at the extent and strangeness of the country on the other side. Her boy was now always in the house with her.

Mrs. Pennithorn could not make enough of the babe or his mother. The earl wrote a blank cheque for Elaine to fill in as she liked. With this money she was to buy all the things that ladies want, or imagine that they want, for a wedding outfit.

Mrs. Pennithorn made the purchases. A few charming dresses were made by that lady's pet dressmaker for Elaine; but there was not much time, so that the other rich dress pieces were to be put away until the new countess returned from her wedding trip.

The baby was to remain with the Pennithorns, under the care of a very respectable elderly nurse, until the return of Lady Levison from Lausanne, for the wedding trip was to be circumscribed to Switzerland.

"I don't like to part with him even for a month," said Elaine, aloud; "indeed it seems to me that a month is a fearful time to be away from all that one loves."

"Not from all, my lady," said the respectable nurse, who, although she did not know that already Elaine had a title, gave her one in advance, for the next day but one Mrs. Pennithorn's governess was to become the Countess of Levison. "Not from all, my lady; there is my lord."

Elaine sighed, a quivering sigh. What a great blank this marriage seemed—empty of all that makes life blissful and wedlock holy love. She stood in the lofty nursery at the Beeches, and watched her child as he slept.

What beautiful clothes she had bought for him lately; what a cherub he looked in his nightdress of fine white cambric and lace. How sweetly he was sleeping; how lovely were his rose-red parted lips. Her tears fell fast on his white cot.

"Nothing that the world holds can ever be half as dear to me as this child," she said to herself.

But Elaine was mistaken.

The next day Elaine drove into London with Mrs. Pennithorn, now the kindest, most gracious hostess in the world. She was going to choose herself a watch, and short, rich watch-chain by the earl's desire. On her return he was to be

at the Beeches for afternoon tea on the lawn. Elaine chose the watch—not the blue enamelled one set with diamonds which Mrs. Pennithorn would have advised her to take—but one perfectly plain—dead gold, unchased, unornamented in any way. The chain she preferred was simple in design, of purest gold, heavy and unchased.

"I like simple things," Elaine said, when they were again in their carriage on their return towards the Beeches.

"You will furnish your house in severe taste," suggested Mrs. Pennithorn.

"The earl's houses are already furnished," Elaine answered, with a smile.

"How happy you must be!" exclaimed Mrs. Pennithorn; "how the earl adores you!" and she sighed.

Elaine answered dreamily:

"I ought to be grateful, for I shall have my child with me when the wedding tour is over," and she sighed.

"I can't make her out a bit," said Mrs. Pennithorn to herself; "she seems to have no love for that fascinating, delightful nobleman. I wonder what his parents will say when they discover that he is married to my governess. I wonder who on earth she is, and what she has been? There is a strange mystery about her."

Elaine tried to talk lightly on indifferent subjects during the drive home, but a strange feeling of uneasiness rankled at her heart, for which she could not account.

"When I am away in Switzerland," she said to herself, "I must have telegrams about the boy every week, or I shall not rest."

At last the carriage is on the fine road called Sydenham Hill, and soon the "Beeches" is in sight. As soon as the carriage stopped, Elaine leaped out without waiting for the assistance of the footman. She opened the gate, crossed the lawn, and looked in at the schoolroom through the open French windows. Something in the emptiness and silence of the place struck a chill to her heart.

Why were the children absent? The earl was to have been there by this time to join the "afternoon tea" on the lawn under the beech trees. The children were all expected to be present. They had been promised this treat; cakes, fruits and creams were to be laid on the table; flowers were to be gathered from the garden and from the hothouse. Now there was no sound of children's voices nor footsteps.

"I suppose the nurses have taken them for a walk," said Elaine to herself; but a very strange fear—a terrible weight oppressed her heart. She crossed the schoolroom, went up the nursery stairs, opened the door. The elderly nurse sat weeping in a low chair near the window.

"Where is my boy?" Elaine asked the question in deep, concentrated tones that had something awful in them.

The nurse, whose name was Mrs. Marsh, began to rock herself to and fro, and her sobs and cries grew louder and more ungovernable.

"Speak, woman! Tell me where is my boy? Have you killed him? If so the law shall have your life."

But Mrs. Marsh only cried and sobbed more and more loudly.

Elaine went straight to her, seized her by the shoulders, and shook her violently.

"Speak, speak, woman! What have you done with my child?"

"I could not help it! Indeed they have gone to look for him; the two nurses, with Mrs. Pennithorn's children and a policeman. Oh, dear, dear, how was I to know! How was I to guess?"

"Will you speak?" pursued Elaine.

She was deadly white. There was a fierce and terrible light in her eyes. The nurse said to herself:

"If they don't take care she will run mad. I wonder my lord wants a bride who is cold to him as a graveyard stone, and who cares only for the troublesome brat whom I hope she will never find."

For Mrs. Marsh was a hypocrite of the first water.

"Will you tell me what you have done with

my child?" pursued Elaine, still speaking in that terrible concentrated voice.

"Well, my lady, I was in the garden with the baby, and the children were there, and the tables were being laid under the beech trees for the afternoon tea, and the baby was crowing and laughing, bless his little heart, and then a gipsy-looking woman, with a red handkerchief over her head, came across the lawn and began to ask leave to tell our fortunes. Nobody had sixpence, so I said I would go to the house for my purse, and I laid little master on the grass where he could tear up the white daisies—it was what he liked. The maids had gone in to ask the butler for the wine. Little miss and master came with me; only Miss Lily, aged five, remained with the baby. When I came back Miss Lily was screaming and crying; she was frightened to death. She said the good-for-nothing baggage of a gipsy had picked up the baby; put it under her cloak, and ran away with him."

A light broke on Lady Elaine. She saw the earl as the arch mover; the secret spring which guided this atrocious plot. He had himself, Elaine remembered, recommended this Mrs. Marsh as a nurse. She was then a vile agent hired for the purpose of destroying Elaine's child, or at least of giving it to a wretch who would quickly compass its destruction. Elaine now comprehended that the earl desired nothing less than her child's death.

"Woman!" said she, to the nurse, "how much were you to receive for arranging the loss of my child? Speak! Tell me! Perhaps I can make it worth your while if you will restore him to me. See, this watch and chain and twenty pounds!"

Poor Elaine was anxious to shower the earl's gifts on Mrs. Marsh, hoping to induce her to restore her child.

Mrs. Marsh was a cunning-eyed woman with a rather hooked nose. She was stout, sixty, eminently respectable as regarded the excellent quality and scrupulous neatness of her attire, and the respectful tones of her voice, but a snifle of contempt, which she could not control, flitted across her wary old face when Elaine made that paltry offer of the watch and chain and twenty pounds.

"I would not sell myself for gold, my dear lady. How can you think I would?" asked Mrs. Marsh, mildly. "Of course the police must be set on the track of that gipsy baggage. When Mr. Pennithorn comes in we must see to it."

"And do you suppose that I will wait for Mr. Pennithorn's return?" Elaine asked, wildly.

"No, I will go at once and set them on the woman's track. Then turning quickly on the nurse: "Where are the other servants? Did any of them see this woman with the red handkerchief?"

"Yes; the upper housemaid did, but she has gone out with the nursemaids and Mrs. Pennithorn's children to see if they can hear anything of the gipsy. She, Maria, would know her again."

A cunning smile, bitter and contemptuous, curled the woman's lips as she spoke thus. Elaine, watching her, saw it, and divined, with a mother's instinct, the whole diabolical plot.

"You are in the pay of the earl," she said, turning suddenly and furiously upon the nurse. "He has bribed you to destroy my child. I will denounce you both to the whole world. Look me in the face and tell me if you dare that I speak falsely."

"I would not be so rude, dear lady. You are excited and don't know what you say. The earl, poor young nobleman, has known me this five years. I lived where he used to visit, at Lady Mapleton's."

Elaine turned away in desperation. She was as perfectly convinced that the earl was at the bottom of this plot as if she had overheard him planning it with Mrs. Marsh. She flew down the stairs, out of the house, and along the road towards Sydenham. At the corner where the path would round into the main road she met a whole troupe of the Pennithorns' excited maid-servants and children. They had been giving

chase, in a vague, aimless way, to the gipsy woman who had stolen Elaine's child.

"Oh, Mrs. Anderson," said the upper housemaid, "she was the most dreadful-looking woman I ever saw! She had a face the colour of an Indian, and black brows and a scowl. I can't think how ever in the world Mrs. Marsh could have left the dear baby alone with her and only little Miss Lily."

Elaine's pale, wild face quite frightened the housemaid. She stopped short in her description of the "dreadful woman."

"Dear Mrs. Anderson, you look ill. You must return to the house and have wine, or you will faint."

"I must not faint until I have found my child. Tell me, Maria, have you spoken to the police?"

"Oh, yes, to two or three, ma'am, and they all say they will follow up the track of every tramp."

"Has anybody seen the gipsy?"

"Not one person that we have spoken to?" said the maids, in a chorus.

"What am I to do? Where am I to go?" asked Elaine, helplessly. And she burst into a passion of tears.

"Put bills out, dear lady, and offer a reward of a hundred pounds to whoever will bring little Lionel back safe and well," said the practical upper housemaid.

"All that shall be done," said Elaine, "but I want my child now—now—at once! I shall not touch food nor shall I sleep until he is found. Come with me to the police-station, Maria. Let us see the superintendent and offer the reward."

It was not very far to the police-station. Elaine put the superintendent in possession of the facts of the case. She even doubled the reward. She offered two hundred pounds for the safe return of her boy.

"You will have him long before to-morrow, ma'am, now," said Maria, the housemaid, gleefully. "Whoever those are that have got him they'll be in a hurry to bring him back when they see the great reward you have offered for him."

But Elaine feared the wealthy earl might have promised a thousand pounds to the people who had stolen the child on condition of their getting safely out of the country with him or killing him. She returned to the Beeches and found Mr. and Mrs. Pennithorn and the earl standing in great consternation on the lawn. The earl was very pale. He made a stride towards her.

"My darling—" he began.

Something in her face stopped him.

"Hush! away from me," she said, "and answer me—where have you sent my child? You may as well tell me first as last. I will never marry you now—not if you were fifty times Earl of Levison and Marquis of Carrig Flynn. No, I would rather tramp the country with my child at my back—sing ballads—or beg or sell tapes and cottons for a living; anything better than a life with a man I loathe! No, keep away; my resolve is taken. The nurse whom you pretended to have known so long, and recommended to me for my darling, is a wretch in your employ. Your wealth and your title gild none of your vices for me. Give me back my child? Do you hear me?"

She spoke now in a loud, clear, high voice. The Pennithorns were amazed at her vehemence, which was almost violence. In vain the earl attempted to soothe her.

"You allow your grief to carry you away, Elaine," he said, and he spoke with a dignified calmness that carried conviction to the Pennithorns. "You will regret this intemperance to-morrow. If we offer a reward for the return of the child we shall have him brought back to-morrow before we have been married two hours."

"And you think that I would marry you?" she said, speaking with all the pride of the scornful countess, her mother, but with more wrath than Lady Donnamore ever chose to manifest.

The earl hated her at that moment, and anathematised her and her child in his heart. He tried to smile.

"My dear Elaine, you will be sorry that you

have insulted me before others—these, your kind friends, Mr. and Mrs. Pennithorn. Surely it is very hard, Mr. Pennithorn, is it not, that Elaine should make me responsible for the carelessness of an old nurse and the wickedness of an old gipsy?"

"Indeed, my lord, it is very hard—very hard indeed," said good, elderly Mr. Pennithorn.

"I am sure Mrs. Anderson will be very sorry when she thinks all this over."

"I shall think of nothing, sir, until I find my child. Yonder Earl of Levison could tell me where to find him at this moment if he liked."

"Indeed I could not," the earl said, eagerly, "or I would in a moment."

But Elaine turned away her head and refused to believe him. Mrs. Pennithorn tried to comfort her.

"You have advertised the reward," she said, "and in a day or so somebody will most certainly bring the child back. You must remain here quietly to receive him."

"I suppose I must," said Elaine, "and you and Mr. Pennithorn are very good and kind, but never ask me to be civil again to the Earl of Levison. You yourself heard him propose to me that I should put my child in an institute. You know he hates him. That nurse upstairs is in his pay; he has sent away my child, perhaps to be murdered!" and Elaine burst into violent weeping.

Elaine shut herself up in her own room, and refused to see the Earl of Levison. He went away with the mournful air of a persecuted martyr in the evening, carrying with him the sympathies of Mr. and Mrs. Pennithorn and all their servants.

There was no wedding the next day at the church; Mr. Pennithorn went and put it off. The days followed the days. The reward was put out everywhere, but not a sign of the child or the tramp came near the Beeches. Elaine lived in her own room; took hardly enough food to keep herself alive, and when the earl wrote to her she tore his letter across and returned it to him.

Stung by this deadly insult the earl's love turned to a violent hate and bitterness. He was at his club when he received the envelope. He tore it open. There was his own impassioned love epistle torn across.

"I hate her!" he muttered, between his shut teeth. "She shall never find her brat again. I will either have him killed or he shall grow up among thieves, and rogues, and burglars, and end his days on a scaffold. Yes, her loveliness is loathsome now in my eyes. I hate her gold hair and her proud, pale face. I hate her when I remember her peasant love and her peasant husband, and I swear to myself that I will be her deadly foe for as long as she lives."

Her deadly foe for as long as she lives! How much meaning was in that threat? In all the years to come how much sorrow and suffering might not that strong man bring upon that frail woman, lovely as a glorious summer night, and with the melancholy as of moonlight written upon the beauty of her face.

(To be Continued.)

A SUGGESTION.

HAVE you ever noticed how readily two little bright eyes can read you? Have you ever thought of the keen instinct which, in childhood, takes the place of experience? If you have, you also know that your little subtleties, your transparent deceptions, and the weaknesses which you take such excessive pains to disguise, are open to their view. They know just how to meet you at every turn, and no shrewder diplomat ever wielded power in societies, or states, than the wee creature who knows its influence over a weak nature.

How easy it is for a loving heart to yield to the sweet pleadings of a little child! So easy, that

many a parent forgets duty and the child's future good to gratify a passing desire. How soon the child learns this! How fleetly its footsteps will outspeed your utmost thought, as it passes from one extreme to another, until at last you are aroused to your personal responsibility. But it is too late. Grown wilful and selfish, your pleadings or threats are equally unheeded. It has become so accustomed to your vacillations that it does not believe you any more.

"Here, Mary," the mother calls out, "you must not stir a step."

"But I want to go; can't I?"

"No, I tell you! I must be obeyed; you are not home half of your time."

"I shan't ask you again, if you'll only let me go this once."

"No! that's an end of it!" snaps the mother. The little girl pouts a while, and then begins to coax again. A conversation follows which is a slight variation of the above, and then, by a gradual descent from authority, the daughter gains consent. Off she goes with a triumphant look, thinking to herself.

"I knew she would let me go if I kept on teasing her; she never means half she says."

The mother goes to the window to see the pride of her heart walk gaily away, and, as she stands there, the angry altercation of her two youngest boys reaches her ears.

"Dear me!" she sighs. Hear those awful boys of mine! I do not know why I can never have better luck in bringing up my children; I try hard enough. If I have told them once I have told them a hundred times that the first time I heard any dispute both of them should be punished; and what good does it do?"

By this time the noise of their voices is distressing, and she rushes forward with a severe frown.

"Tom, here, I say! Joe, what are you doing? What will Mrs. Placid think downstairs, to hear such a din? She'll surely want us to leave before the year is out, if you do not behave better."

"Mamma," cries Tom, as she pauses, "he wants me to let him have my new cart, and I won't let him; it's mine; papa gave it to me at Christmas."

"Can't he let me have it?" Joe asks, excitedly. "I don't care! I think you're real mean, if you don't!"

"Why, Joe," exclaims the mother, aghast, "I must punish you for that. How dare you!"

"I didn't mean to," Joe says, half defiantly, half regretfully, "but I think you might."

"It is shameful to treat your mamma so, and I shall have to punish you this time; I have let you off too many times already, you are growing worse every day."

So saying, she turns to leave the room; but Joe stops her at the door.

"I won't say so again," he pleads.

"Do you mean your promise?" she asks, lingering undecidedly.

"Yes, ma'am, I do."

"Well, then, I forgive you this time; but remember, if I ever hear you say so again—"

She leaves the premonition unfinished and goes out, and the boys look at each other and laugh.

"I knew she wouldn't whip me; she hardly ever does, and I wasn't much afraid," Joe says, with the air of a young bravo.

Glad to escape the irksome task of chastising her children, that mother pursues this ruinous course. Do you wonder they learn to question her assertions, and that her reputation for truthfulness is not enviable in her own family? Is that not a good key to the mystery which puzzles her so, "why she could not have better luck in bringing up her children?"

Never say what you do not mean to your child; never make promises you cannot fulfil; never issue a command unless you think it necessary, then see that it is enforced. You can do this and yet not be stern and relentless. Your children will only love and honour you the more if they recognise, that dignity in your government of them.

"And how am I to enforce my commands without undue severity, if I am so strict?" perhaps you ask.

There is a great variety of dispositions among children, but the greater majority can be led through their hearts and intellects. Even a very young child can be reasoned with, and a few kind words of explanation will often clear the troubled little mind, and make duty a real pleasure. It is not beneath your dignity as a parent or teacher to say why you refuse them what they desire; and oh, how much more they will love you for it! How many bitter feelings, and how many sad hours of seeming friendlessness and neglect, will be spared the tender heart! Once establish the fact in their minds that you do everything for their good, and there will be comparatively few who will be reckless in their wilfulness. Let them feel the depths of your love, and theirs will reward you in turn.

In this subject of the government of the young the fatal mistake of showing an evil temper when correcting the erring naturally suggests itself.

There is nothing which will cause such bad feelings in their minds as to think they are the butt of some one's evil passions. Do not beat the air with your rash words, nor follow Solomon's sage advice about using the rod of correction, when you are angry. Sit down a minute and count a hundred backward, then reckon the effect of your example and training on your charge's future, and you will be in the right mood to attend to the subject in hand.

Are you a Christian? If so, pray that you may build up a character that will be so noble that children may look into your face and so into your heart, and see all things lovely and pure there; then you will not dwarf a single budding flower of immortality. Be childlike in your tenderness of heart and singleness of purpose, yet rich in the ripe development of maturer years.

"Look into childhood's beaming eyes,
See how the soul's clear fire
Beams like the rays from sunny skies,
And see how pure its thoughts arise,
And every fond desire.

Ah! cast no dark reflection there,
Within that soul so true;
Stand back, if you are not so fair,
And breathe a humble, contrite prayer
To be thus childlike too." J. R. B.

A RUSSIAN HERO: OR,

Marko Tyre's Treason.

CHAPTER XXV.

ALONG the principal road leading to Spring Corners from the west could have been seen advancing, at a snail's pace, towards the close of day, an old-fashioned vehicle drawn by horses which had evidently been chosen for strength instead of beauty.

This vehicle contained two persons, the Countess Sabielin and her serf, Bereffsky, alias Dr. Misket.

The couple were on their way to the asylum of Dr. Rubini.

The countess had conceived a project which she believed to be brilliant.

She was dressed in a style that would have been more appropriate to the Witch of Endor than to an ordinary being in actual life.

The chief characteristics of her principal garments were wildness and uncouthness and amplitude. Her hair was dishevelled and inordinate in quantity, as it well might be, it being all false.

Her face was thickly covered with paints of such dark and sallow hues, and with such blendings of all sorts of strange shadows that

her identity was literally buried beneath them.

By stuffing her cheeks with harmless objects to chew, she had given them a fullness they had not possessed before in twenty years. She had painted a circle around her eyes that gave an expression to them that was peculiarly unnatural.

The clashing inharmonious colours had been so cleverly arranged that a glance at her was prima facie evidence of her insanity.

She stared at her fingers and muttered strange incoherences to herself, or sat as if turned to stone.

"It is possible that we shall find Rubini absent," said the countess, as she peered ahead, over the tree-tops, in the hopes of catching a glimpse of the Italian's famous institution. "If we do, we shall have only to deal with the assistants, and that will be a great point in our favour. The assistants are naturally far less sharp of eye than the master."

"But suppose we tumbled direct upon Rubini?" asked Berefsky. "What then?"

"In that case, do you think he would know me?"

The serf took a long look at the fantastic outlines of his mistress.

"Not unless he is half demon, as so many of his victims believe!" he then answered. "I should not recognise you, my lady—could not possibly do so—if I were to meet you in your own house!"

"Then there is a fair probability that Rubini would not know me, if we were to meet face to face," said the countess. "But suppose he should? You are armed?"

The serf smiled grimly.

"From the hour when I left the mines of Siberia," he said, "I have held myself in readiness to sell my life dearly at any moment!"

"That is the right spirit, Berefsky," declared the countess. "The greatest battles of the world have been won by desperate men. It is really necessary for the success of great and important operations that we get wrought up to the do or die principle! To resume: there is the chance of Rubini's absence, and the further chance that I would escape recognition. If the worst should come, I am half inclined to kill him and take refuge in flight to the Sultan's dominions. You will of course be guided by me, but I warn you now to respond promptly to any call I may make upon you!"

"Rest assured, my lady, that you will not have to call upon me twice," assured the serf. "As in the past, so in the future!"

"It is now about time for me to enter upon the role I propose to play," said Sabielin, as she indicated by a nod their near approach to Rubini's village. "I believe you understand the whole matter? You are Dr. Bierstadt, of Riga, on a tour through Russia with your sister, Mrs. Ulmer. Your sister has suddenly gone crazy, and you have been recommended by a friend in St. Petersburg to place her in Rubini's asylum. It is rather late to-night for a medical examination of the patient, and indeed I am so fatigued with the journey that the least bother to-night would be likely to bring on a fit of raving, and so, as a considerate brother, you will adjourn the whole inquiry until morning. Meanwhile, all I need is an ordinary room, and you will remain in a room adjoining, to take care of me, and as a sort of precaution against my having a bad spell in the night. There will be no need of bolts and straight-jackets for me, or of any particular attention from the learned Dr. Rubini—at least not before morning. I think our little programme is perfectly understood between us?"

"Perfectly, my lady. But you must, of course, be tired out—heedless—morose possibly—and pay no attention to what I may say to Rubini, or to what he may say to you. In this way I think we can smuggle our way unsuspected into the asylum!"

"At any rate, we'll now make the effort," said the countess, "for here we are!"

Assuming an air in strict conformity to the character he was to represent, the serf drove up to the entrance of the renowned asylum. De-

scending from the vehicle, he hitched his horses to a post, and then turned his attention to his mistress, who sat as if absolutely demented, the more especially as her quick glances had remarked that a pair of sharp eyes were bent upon her from one of the windows of the far-famed Italian's office.

"Here we are, sister," announced the serf, entering upon his career as Dr. Bierstadt, in a loud tone, as he offered his hand. "Shall I not help you out?"

The Countess Sabielin, in her character of the unfortunate patient, mumbled a few words incoherently, apparently not comprehending the question addressed to her.

"Well, you can stay here until I have made inquiries," said the pretended brother. "Don't move! don't fret or worry!"

And, with these injunctions, the serf took his way briskly into the office.

A single person was there to receive him—one of Rubini's assistants—and to this man the business of the new-comer was soon imparted.

"You can see Dr. Rubini himself, or not, just as you choose, Dr. Bierstadt," said the assistant, politely. "His residence is that large villa between the asylum and the hotel. I see his horses are still at the door, and consequently perceive that Dr. Rubini has not yet started for the capital."

"Ah! he is going to town, then, and—"

"Yes, there he is now," interrupted the assistant, as the Italian came out upon his front steps and spoke to his coachman. "If you would like to see him—"

"I'll just say a few words to him," said the pretended Dr. Bierstadt, promptly. "It can do no harm to call his personal attention to the matter."

He slipped briskly across the intervening space, and introduced himself in as few words as possible, stating his business.

"Oh, this is a simple, every-day affair, Dr. Bierstadt," returned Rubini. "There is no necessity of my personal intervention in the matter—the more especially as you are a physician yourself, and can state all the facts in the case with perfect clearness to my assistant. I am just starting for the capital and will leave you to make any arrangements with him that may be mutually pleasant."

He looked across the intervening space as he spoke, gesticulating to his assistant, and readily telegraphed to him by this process an order in conformity with the declarations he had just made.

"Good day, then, Dr. Rubini, and a pleasant journey to you," said the serf, with a flourish expressive of satisfaction. "I will arrange the matter with your assistant."

He had no sooner directed his steps towards the asylum than Rubini, who was dressed with remarkable care and richness, took possession of his handsome equipage, and was driven rapidly away in the direction of the capital, vanishing quickly from view.

The serf and his mistress drew a long sigh of relief at this disappearance.

By this time the first shadows of night had commenced descending upon the scene, and this circumstance, in connection with Rubini's departure, encouraged the conspirators not a little in the projects upon which they had entered.

They felt that the first essential steps had been taken.

The bold action of the serf in seeing Dr. Rubini personally had of course paved the way, in connection with Rubini's telegraphic signals, for a prompt arrangement of the necessary business details with the assistant.

"If there is nothing violent about your sister," said the official, as he met the serf on the steps, "let her come in with you. And, by the way, what orders shall I give respecting your horses?"

"Merely to have them cared for at the stable belonging to the hotel, Doctor—Doctor—"

"My name is Ellegro," said the assistant. "I am a countryman of Dr. Rubini."

"And perfectly authorised to arrange this

whole matter, Dr. Rubini told me," returned the serf. "If you will have the goodness, therefore, Dr. Allegro, to send my horses around to the stable of the hotel, stating whose horses they are, and leaving orders for them to be at my disposal any moment I may want them, you will greatly oblige me."

The necessary orders were at once given to one of the numerous serfs employed about the place, and Allegro led the way into the office of the asylum, closely followed by the supposed patient, who leaned heavily upon the arm of the supposed German physician.

"A chronic case, eh, Dr. Bierstadt?" asked Allegro, as he motioned his pretended colleague to place the patient in a large chair at one side of the apartment.

"No, Dr. Allegro, but a sudden and new thing," was the answer.

"What form does her mania take, sir? I mean, what is the ruling idea of her madness?"

"It would be hard to state any one prominent notion, sir," replied Berefsky, "unless I should say, perhaps, that she at times believes herself to be the Countess Sabielin. That idea has had possession of her for several hours past."

"Indeed? I'm sorry I didn't know that sooner, said Allegro, with a glance expressive of awakening interest at the patient. "What an odd fancy!"

"You know the countess, then?" pursued the serf, carelessly.

"Not personally, but I know a great deal about her," declared Allegro, as he helped himself to a chair and waved his supposed colleague to another. "The countess is one of the especial friends of Dr. Rubini."

"Indeed?" exclaimed the serf in turn. "I would not have suspected the fact, seeing that I have never seen them together, or heard of the existence of any relations between them."

"Oh, their relations are not public, but rather the reserved relations of physician and patient," said Allegro. "Dr. Rubini has bled the countess often!"

A coarse laugh escaped him.

The countess had at first been annoyed with Berefsky for his bold sally at her personality, which had been entirely an aspiration of the moment, but the laugh of Allegro reconciled her to the remark which had let to its utterance.

She saw at once that her name was a by-word and a hissing among the creatures of her enemy, and could well comprehend how much he had betrayed and abused her while professing to guard her secret.

She then and there resolved that she would trail the Italian in the dust, or that she would perish in the attempt!

In fact, she opened her soul to a resolve to get square with him!

"I hear the countess has a dark side to her character?" said the serf, carelessly.

"Very dark, sir, no doubt! As dark as the bottomless pit! But, of course, I can say nothing against her," he added. "That would be quite unprofessional. Let us then to business. Is your sister married?"

He proceeded to put the long list of questions customary in such cases, and at the same time carelessly jotted down the answers in a book kept for that purpose.

"Since your sister is so quiet, Dr. Bierstadt," he then said, "I can give you a large and airy parlour on the second floor, with a couple of bedrooms adjoining. This will enable you to keep an eye upon the poor lady, and at the same time secure a comfortable night's rest for yourself in case she should be quiet. The terms may seem a little high to you, but the accommodations are splendid. Shall I show you the rooms?"

"Thank you, I need nothing more than your word for them, Dr. Allegro," said the serf, promptly. "I will, of course, take them. But suppose I should have occasion for your services during the night? How could I find you?"

"Oh, I or one of the other assistants will be here all night," was the reply. "It is an invariable rule for one of us to sleep in the office."

"I see. Everything suits me perfectly, Dr. Allegro," declared the serf. "And if it is agreeable to you, Doctor, we will go to our rooms. I am anxious to see my poor sister abed and asleep before she is seized with one of her spells."

Allegro seemed pleased with this suggestion, and indeed he ventured to remark that he was himself considerably fatigued, having had a serious trouble on the preceding night with a refractory patient.

Helping himself to a light he led the way up a broad staircase, showing his new guests into a handsome suite of front rooms overlooking the square.

Here they were soon left to themselves, with sundry final suggestions and observations.

"Well, here we are," said the countess, when the doors were locked from within, as she threw off her outward disguises. "Here we are, in the same building with Mrs. Gradowsky, if she is still living—as I believe—and if we don't discover her whereabouts before the night is ended, I shall be greatly mistaken!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

THERE was nothing about the asylum of Rubini to distinguish it especially from asylums the world over. The building was large and roomy, three stories in height, with spacious and well-ventilated apartments. The majority of the rooms were well-furnished. The domestic service of the establishment was intelligent and ample. Rubini had taken good care to keep his cloven foot concealed, and to maintain a fair outward exterior in his dealings with everybody, so far as this line of conduct was possible.

It had thus come to pass that the establishment of the Italian was reputed one of the best of its kind, although two or three singular tragedies had taken place there.

The room in which the pretended Dr. Bierstadt had taken up his quarters was worthy of all the praise the assistant keeper had bestowed upon it. It had been especially fitted up for the daughter of a rich noble who was inclined to marry beneath her station, and who therefore became a fit subject for Rubini's attentions. The rumour was, that the young lady had made her escape by one of the front windows, on the principle that "love laughs at locksmiths," but the room was nevertheless well secured against all attempts of that nature. While roomy and comfortably furnished, its windows were covered with stout bars of iron, and its doors and locks were massive.

As to the bedrooms on each hand, they were even stronger than the parlour to which they belonged, not having windows upon the square, or doors opening into the interior.

At the moment the countess and her serf were escorted to their quarters the asylum was comparatively quiet, the patients having just had their supper, and in many cases having already retired to their beds. But there were nevertheless enough of these unfortunates about to proclaim the character of the establishment, and even display a fair share of its inseparable horrors. The tread of a number of the more noisy and troublesome patients, as they paced rapidly to and fro upon the bare floors of their empty apartments, was a sufficient announcement of their madness. From time to time the insane yells of some lunatic would fill the entire establishment for several minutes, or until one of the keepers could prevail upon the unfortunate to be quiet, or had hustled him away to one of the cells provided against such contingencies. A scene of this nature took place immediately after the Countess Sabielin and Berefsky were shown to their apartments, and it was only natural that it made a very strong and painful impression upon them both.

"I do not see how a sane person can endure these horrors," murmured the countess, when the uproar had subsided. "A few days of these sights and sounds would certainly drive me distracted!"

"What must be the condition of Mrs. Gradowsky, then, if she is still living, as we suppose,

and has been shut up here all these five years?" returned Berefsky. "She is likely to be as mad as the maddest!"

"That remains to be seen," said the countess, in a cold speculative voice. "Let's sit down here by one of these front windows and watch and listen an hour or two, and, at the same time, endeavour to arrive at a clear understanding of our proposed action!"

The couple proceeded to make themselves as comfortable as possible, and quietly discussed their surroundings and the prospects of the masquerade upon which they had entered.

"My plan would be this," said the serf, as he toyed with the handle of a formidable knife he had concealed under his jacket. "To wait here until all is still, and then explore the institution from foundation to garret. If we find Mrs. Gradowsky, we will take her away with us. If she is not here, or is not accessible, we'll beat a retreat at our leisure and convenience!"

For a long time the couple divided their attention between their projects and their surroundings. In the course of a couple of hours all had become comparatively still throughout the asylum. One or two uneasy patients were still creating an occasional disturbance, but the great majority of them had sunk into that repose which was their only relief from the horrors of their situation. Still another hour or two of waiting, and even these occasional alarms had subsided.

"It is time to be moving now, Countess," suggested the serf, "and this is the theory upon which we will proceed: You have suddenly been seized with one of your spells, and I am going down to the office for assistance. Through my carelessness in leaving the door of our parlour unlocked, it will not be a difficult matter for you to follow me. For the rest, we must be guided by circumstances."

"And remember, Berefsky, that nothing is to prevent our escape!" enjoined the countess, with grim resolution. "Kill everyone who really gets into our way!"

Nodding assent to these instructions, the serf arose and led the way to the door. He had already removed his shoes and a portion of his outer garments, not merely to suggest to any observer that he had retired for the night, but to be unimpeded in any sudden struggle of life and death that might be forced upon him. In another moment he had emerged into the dimly-lighted passage, and he was on his way down stairs to the office, his footfalls hardly giving a sound, or his garments a rustle. The countess followed him at a distance. The movements of both attested that they had settled upon their course of action, and they had no apprehension of personal evil, even if they should find insurmountable difficulties in the way of realising their projects.

Arriving at the entrance of the office, the serf halted and listened, applying his ear to the key-hole.

The sound of heavy breathing reached him from within.

He knew that the guardian of the place was already asleep.

Trying the door, he found it locked, as expected.

The serf reflected a moment, and then drew from his pocket a pair of nippers he had brought with him, with a quantity of other material suitable to his purpose and to the occasion.

At the second or third trial he turned the key in the lock, thus giving himself admittance into the office, and so noiselessly that the proceeding did not disturb the sleeper.

This was a point gained, of course, as any noise he might have made in arousing the sleeper would have been likely to arouse others.

Advancing silently to the sleeper, who occupied a lounge at one side of the apartment, the serf shook him gently.

No notice was taken of him. The sleep of the keeper was evidently the sleep of profound weariness and exhaustion.

By the faint gleams of a lamp upon a table at hand, Berefsky could see that the man before him was Dr. Allegro.

The question now presented itself whether to

awaken the assistant, or to slip a pair of handcuffs upon him as he slumbered.

The serf decided upon the former course, for the reason that he felt himself competent to handle him, and more especially because he wished to obtain some information from him, and to avoid violence—if such a course were possible.

"Eh? Who is here?" exclaimed Allegro, in a startled voice, as he arose, in response to the severe shaking the serf gave him.

"It's only Dr. Bierstadt," was the answer.

"But how did you get in?" asked Allegro, in bewilderment. "I'm sure I locked the door! I always lock it! I wouldn't dare go to sleep if I didn't."

"I found it unlocked, sir, and came in as quietly as possible, presuming that would be your expectation and desire. Possibly you may have locked the door, without its being fully closed."

"Let's see" was Allegro's answer.

He sprang from the lounge and stepped to the entrance.

"Sure enough!" he muttered. "The key is turned in the lock!"

Berefsky was perfectly sure of this fact, he having turned it himself as he entered, in accordance with the habits of cunning and caution which had become a part of his nature and existence.

"It must be as you suggested, Dr. Bierstadt," added the assistant. "I am glad to discover my mistake before any harm is done. What can I do for you?"

"My sister has one of her bad spells," replied the pretended physician, "and I find I have left her medicine in a bag under the seat of our carriage. I shall have to go to the hotel for it. Is the key of the outer door handy?"

"Here it is, Doctor," said Allegro, as he rubbed his eyes and yawned. "Take it along. Let yourself out and in, and then return the key to me."

And with this Allegro threw himself upon his lounge, and stretched himself out with the evident intention of making himself comfortable during his colleague's absence.

"All right, sir, and many thanks," returned the serf, and with this he vanished.

A word to the countess in the corridor gave her every necessary information in regard to the situation, and the serf lost no time in giving himself egress from the establishment.

His first glance out of doors told him that the night was everything to be desired, pleasant and yet dark, and the village was already profoundly quiet, not a soul being visible.

Going direct to the hotel, the serf called for his horses, remarking that he had finished his business at the asylum, and was going to improve the fine night by driving back to the capital, where he had business of pressing importance. The proceeding seemed natural and regular enough, and in the course of a few minutes Dr. Bierstadt had settled his bill and taken his departure.

Concealing his horses in a retired portion of the grounds adjoining the asylum, the cunning serf tied them securely, and then took his way quickly back to the asylum, and to the presence of the sleepy assistant.

"You can lay the key on the table, Dr. Bierstadt," said Allegro, with a yawn. "Try to get along without troubling me, if you can, for I am really under the weather!"

"Sorry for that," said the serf. "I hear you are one of the owners of this establishment, conjointly with Dr. Rubini?"

"What fool told you that? I don't have a rouble's interest here! I really wish I had. It is one of the best-paying institutions in all Russia!"

"You must at least get big wages?"

"To the contrary, not half what I ought to get," said Allegro, discontentedly.

"Then perhaps you would not be slow to make a few thousand roubles for a moment's work," suggested Berefsky, dropping into a chair near the assistant.

"What do you mean, sir?"

Allegro had already opened his eyes widely.

"The serf drew from his pocket five crisp banknotes of a thousand roubles each, and passed them in review under the attentive gaze of the assistant.

"Oh! something's on foot, eh? What is it?" "That's my affair, of course," said the serf, smiling, but at the same time watching the assistant as a cat watches a mouse. "Will you earn this money or not?"

"I'll earn it, sir. Let's have your two questions."

"First, then, in what room is Mrs. General Gradowsky?"

The assistant met the gaze of his questioner in curious amazement a few moments, and then answered:

"She is in No. 73—on the same floor as yourself, further along the hall."

"Very good, sir. Where is the key of No. 73?"

"It is in its proper place in the numbered rack behind you."

"Better and better, Dr. Allegro. Lie down again, that I may slip these banknotes into your pocket readily. There! And now let me have your wrists. Of course, I have overpowered you in a pitched battle—as, indeed, I can readily do—and you are to be handcuffed and gagged. In five minutes the whole affair will be ended. So."

Allegro seemed half inclined to repudiate the transaction, but the presence of the five banknotes in his pocket kept him quiet. At the end of a minute he was perfectly helpless.

"That's all," said the serf, as he secured the key of Mrs. Gradowsky's room. "Keep quiet, and I will come and release you. I will look you in, of course, but within five minutes you shall see me again."

He withdrew promptly, finding the countess awaiting him at the door, in a state of great anxiety.

"Remain where you are, Countess, and leave the rest to me," whispered Berefsky, hurriedly. "Only, when you see me coming back attended, you had better slip out ahead of me—here is the key—and take your way to the group of trees you must have noticed in the grounds as we drove up to the asylum."

"Oh, yes!"

"Well, the horses are there. Take possession of the carriage and wait for me." Ascending the broad stairs, Berefsky took his way without the least difficulty to room No. 73, where he knocked gently.

"Who is there?" called a low voice.

"A friend," was the answer—"a friend sent here by your coachman, Stolbi." This was communicated through the keyhole, in the lowest whisper of which the serf was capable.

"Don't be alarmed," added Berefsky. "I have the key, and will open the door."

He hastened to do so. Mrs. Gradowsky stood before him, her outlines barely visible in the darkness.

"The way of escape is open," whispered the serf, rapidly. "Stolbi is in waiting with horses. Come quickly!"

He turned to retrace his steps, the lady fluttering after him with an eagerness and excitement to which no words can do justice.

"One moment," breathed Berefsky, at the foot of the stairs.

Giving himself admittance into the office, the serf slipped to the side of his prisoner.

"The thing is done," he communicated. "But your share in the business hardly entitles you to five thousand roubles. Upon second thoughts, I will relieve you of that money."

He secured the notes, despite the desperate efforts of the victim to make some resistance, and in another moment had rejoined Mrs. Gradowsky, leaving Allegro a helpless prisoner behind him.

In fact, the mood of the assistant at that moment was not far removed from madness!

"This way, my lady," said the serf, turning his steps towards the outer door. "We must not lose a single instant!"

As noiselessly as possible, they emerged from the asylum, leaving the door fast behind them,

and at the end of a few moments more they had reached the waiting carriage.

"My daughter!" murmured Mrs. Gradowsky, at sight of the muffled figure already occupying the vehicle.

"No, my lady, but a friend who will reveal herself later," said Berefsky. "Up, up, please—before our flight is discovered!"

Mrs. Gradowsky hastened to comply, and the serf lost no time in putting the carriage in motion.

"We have her!" was the one wildly exulting thought that filled the soul of the Countess Sabielin!

To be Continued.)

MAKING THE BEST OF IT.

A FRENCH dog was taught by his master to fetch him food from the baker's in a basket. One evening when the dog was returning to his master thus furnished, two other dogs, attracted by the savoury smell of the victuals that this new messenger was carrying, determined to attack him. The dog put his basket on the ground and set himself courageously against the first that advanced towards him, but while he was engaged with the one the other ran to the basket to help himself.

At length, seeing that there was no chance of beating both dogs and saving his master's dinner, he threw himself between his two opponents, and without further ceremony quickly despatched the remainder of the food himself, and then returned to his master with the empty basket. That dog evidently knew how to look out for number one.

HOW FAR THEY WALK.

Of course exercise in the open air should be taken by every lady; but few housekeepers have any idea of the number of miles they walk daily in going about the house. The pedometer, a little watch-like contrivance, which, carried in the pocket, feels each footfall and records the total in miles and fractions, reveals some extraordinary facts. A lady, an acknowledged invalid, who thought she saved every unnecessary step, found that she had, between breakfast and tea, walked nearly two miles without going outside her door.

The pedometer would probably show that nervous ladies who "can't sit still," and are constantly "jumping up" to get this or that, walk at least five miles a day in their daily travels about the house. What it would show in the case of young ladies who dance by the hour, yet are too delicate to walk, may be imagined. If these steps were taken in the open air the result would be very beneficial.

CORK.

It may not be generally known that this valuable substance is nothing more or less than the bark of an evergreen oak, growing principally in Spain and other countries bordering on the Mediterranean. In English gardens it is only a curiosity. When the cork tree is about fifteen years old the bark has attained a thickness and quality suitable for manufacturing purposes; and, after stripping, a further growth of eight years produces a second crop; and so on at intervals, for even ten or twelve crops. The bark is stripped from the tree in pieces two inches in thickness, of considerable length, and of such width as to retain the curved form of the trunk when it has been stripped.

The bark peeler or cutter makes a slit in the bark with a knife, perpendicularly from the top to the bottom; he makes another incision parallel to it, and at some distance from the former, and two shorter horizontal cuts at the top and bottom. For stripping off the piece

thus isolated he uses a kind of knife with two handles and a curved blade; sometimes after the cuts have been made he leaves the tree to throw off the bark by the spontaneous action of the vegetation within the trunk. The detached pieces are soaked in water, and are placed over a fire when nearly dry, and acquire a more compact texture by being scorched. To make them flat they are pressed down with weights while yet hot.

HUNGARIAN WOMEN.

WHILE the Hungarian men are dandies who delight in clean shirts and gay colours, the women dress badly. Nothing can well be more wretched than the dress of the Hungarian women on the banks of the lower Danube. At Mohacs, for example, one saw them marching down to the river to get water, clad in a pair of their husband's enormous boots, a short petticoat, scarcely reaching to the knees, and a sheepskin jacket that also was evidently the property of their better half.

Again, at the frontier station, just before entering Roumania, my sensibilities were somewhat shocked at seeing a girl of seventeen busily engaged in sweeping the verandah, clad in nothing but a linen under-garment of very moderate dimensions. In Hungary, in short, while the man is well dressed, his wife or daughter is clad like a savage.

HEALTH MAXIMS.

NATURE is very much like a shiftless child, who the more he is helped, the more he looks for it. The more medicine a man takes, the more he will have to take, whether it be anodyne, tonic or alternative.

The thinnest veil or silk handkerchief thrown over the face while riding or walking against a cold wind, is a remarkably comfortable protection.

Never sit or stand with the wind blowing on you for a single moment, for it speedily produces a chill, to be followed with a fever, and then a bad cold.

A hearty meal taken while excessively fatigued has often destroyed life.

A sour look, an impatient gesture, a cross word at the breakfast-table, is enough to make the best food indigestible, and spoil the day.

A good laugh is anti-dyspeptic.

To spend two or three moments on rising and retiring, in rapid friction of the whole surface of the body with the hand is a more rational treatment of the skin, and a more health-promoting operation for most persons, than a daily cold-water bath.

If you can't get good wages, work for your board rather than do nothing, or go in debt, or live on the earnings or charity of another.

Acidity always arises either from having eaten too much food, or of a quality which the stomach could not dissolve. The remedy is, eat less and less each meal until there is no acidity, then you know for yourself how much your stomach can manage! to eat the same amount and as regularly, take something to correct the acidity, is certain to cause dyspepsia, or some other more serious form of disease.

REFRERRING to the wholesale destruction of birds for the adornment of ladies' bonnets and hats, a contemporary states that a German dealer recently received a consignment of 32,000 dead humming birds, 80,000 bodies of various aquatic birds, and 800,000 pairs of wings. The same paper suggests that as, owing to the substitution of birds for ribbons, the ribbon trade of Coventry is suffering, ladies of fashion might do both their fellow creatures and the birds much good by reverting to ribbons for the adornment of their headgear.



[A STRANGE MENDICANT.]

"FOR MAMMA'S FIRE."

"Mr dears," cried Mrs. Chidleigh, hurrying into the morning parlour, where Berenice and I sat, busy over blue and pink taritan candy-bags, for the charity fair, "I've news for you, the very best of news."

It was the day before Thanksgiving, and the fair was to be held, that evening, at my aunt's house.

"What is it?" demanded Berenice, scattering her candies, "Has Mr. Everleigh spoken at last?"

My aunt flushed, and bit her lip.

"My dear Berenice," she said, "you should not be so out-spoken! To hear you, one would fancy we were exceedingly anxious about Mr. Everleigh."

"Well, aren't we?" interrupted Berry saucily, tossing her blonde hair. "I'm sure we've been expecting him to speak for the last month, and hoping for it, too. Where's the harm in saying what we feel?"

Aunt was silent. I laughed, as I filled a blue bag with pink bon-bons.

"You seem to take it for granted, Berry," I said, "that when Mr. Everleigh does speak, it will be to propose for you. Now, you forget me. Who can tell which he may choose?"

Berenice curled her red lip.

"He'll not be likely to choose you, Meg, at any rate," she said with a sneer.

Now, I knew this to be quite true. I was a poor orphan, my father having died, penniless, a few years before. We lived in a small cottage, with only four rooms, that had once been the gardener's cottage, and which had been granted to us, rent free, by Aunt Mary. In fact, we were, more or less, dependents on her bounty.

Mother eked out our scanty living by taking in plain sewing, and I earned a little by fine embroidery, but I had not much time of my own for this kind of work, for my aunt was sending for me, continually, to do this and that, and I did not dare to refuse. I was in short a kind of maid-of-all-work, up at the "great house," as we called Aunt Mary's residence. Sometimes, I thought, with a sigh, of the difference between mamma's lot and Aunt Mary's. Then I remembered that the latter had sold herself for money, marrying an old man who was twice her age, and both jealous and exacting. Fortunately, he had died, at last.

But Aunt Mary had, long since, paid the penalty, by growing harder-hearted and more selfish daily, when my own dear parent, who had married for love, had been supremely happy; at least, while father lived. I was not sure, recalling all this, that, in spite of our privations, we ought to complain. Yet Berenice was correct, of course. What right had I, a dependent, even to think of Mr. Everleigh, who was rich, fashionable, and a favourite everywhere?

But I was human, after all, and this taunt roused me.

"I can't see why he shouldn't marry even me, if he loved me," I retorted. He's a free agent, at any rate."

Berenice tossed her head, till her ringlets were in a shimmer.

"How foolish you are," she said, "for goodness' sake hold your tongue. Mamma, love," and she turned her back on me, "don't you mean to tell us your good news?"

"Assuredly, when you are polite enough to hear it. I've been waiting now, some ten minutes. Are you and Meg quite done with your absurd discussion?"

"Quite, mamma! It was Meg who started it; she's always chattering nonsense. But let us hear the news."

Aunt drew a letter from her pocket.

"A letter," cried Berenice: "then it does not concern Mr. Everleigh, after all."

"My dear, no! No one mentioned Mr. Everleigh's name but yourself. I really wish you would try and be a little more guarded. The letter is from your uncle in Shanghai. He is coming home."

Berenice and I gave a simultaneous exclamation. Since the earliest years of our childhood, "our uncle in China" had been the centre about which all our romance had revolved. He was mamma's brother, and Aunt Mary's also. Years before, when I was a mere baby, he had gone abroad, become soldier and sailor by turns, and finally, had amassed, we had heard, a great fortune. Once in a long while, a battered box, that smelled of camphor and foreign spices, came over the seas, a reminder that Uncle Hal had not quite forgotten either mamma or Aunt Mary. But generally the gifts were to my aunt. "Those on whom success shines," says the homily, "are successful in all things."

"When your uncle comes home from China, Berenice dear, we will do thus and so," was always on my aunt's tongue; for, rich as she was, at least, comparatively, she was always wanting more.

And now he was coming! Berry screamed with delight.

"I shall tell Everleigh," she said, almost instantly, and a little spitefully. "I daresay he'll speak now."

"It doesn't at all matter whether he speaks or not, my daughter," said my aunt, loftily. "When your uncle arrives, and we may look for him any day next week, you will feel, my dear, that your position in life is doubly secured. Even Mr. Everleigh would hardly be a match for you! So now you and Maggie go on with your work. I'm glad our charity fair comes off to-night; we shall be busy hereafter preparing for your uncle. What a pity he couldn't be here for Thanksgiving!"

Having said this, my aunt sat down to write out invitations and directions for the charity fair. A devout church member, and something of a philanthropist, was aunt.

"Mamma, mamma, I say," called Jack, Berenice's hopeful brother, a lad some dozen summers old, thrusting his curly head in at the door, "have you got any stale victuals, or old clothes, or anything to give away?"

My aunt put down her gold pen, and threw back the point-lace lappets of her breakfast-cap, with an air of annoyance. Jack was such a torment!

"Why, Jack?" demanded Berenice.

"'Cause there's a beggar out here! He looks awful hungry; and ain't got no overcoat. I say, mamma, can I give him that cold turkey in the larder?"

Mamma leaped to her feet.

"No, I want that turkey to make sandwiches for the fair; don't dare to touch it. Send the beggar away; you know I won't have tramps about the place. Send him away this minute; and go straight up to the library, and write out your Latin exercises."

Jack turned from the door, a cloud on his sunny face. Looking out of the window, I saw an old man, insufficiently clad. Our big dog, Carlo, was snarling at his heels. The beggar was so close to the window that he must have

heard every word my aunt said; and he looked crest-fallen enough in consequence.

"It doesn't seem quite consistent," I remarked, for once letting my indignation get the better of my love of peace, "to have the house about one's ears, getting ready for a charity fair, and a starving beggar walking from the door unfed."

"A thieving tramp," cried my aunt, hotly. "Keep silent, Meg, and don't interfere. It's none of your business anyhow."

I was prudent enough to make no reply, but my blood boiled nevertheless. Had I remained much longer, I should have lost my self-control I fear; so I got up directly, and saying that I had promised to go home soon, left my aunt's.

Our cottage was at the edge of the wood, just outside of the great gates; but the avenue was half a mile long, and before I reached the gates I had almost overtaken the beggar. He seemed not only old but feeble, and walked with difficulty; he was probably deaf also, as he did not seem to hear my footsteps. Just outside the gates he met my little sister Kitty, who was returning from the wood where she had been to pick up sticks for our fire.

"My dear," said the old man, addressing her, "can you tell me where I can get a bit of supper and a night's lodging? I am old and poor, and haven't the money to go to a tavern. You look as if you had a kind heart, God bless it. I've just been turned away from the big house here; but perhaps you are not so hard-hearted as the mistress there."

Kitty's honest little face showed the pity that she felt. But she was only a child, and shrank from responsibility.

"I don't know, sir," she said, diffidently. "I think mamma will give you something to eat; and maybe we can find a bed for you; that is, if sister Margaret and I sleep on the settee; for you see our house is small. But oh, here comes sister herself," she cried, as she discovered me, "and she'll tell you all about it."

My heart was still hot with indignation at the brutality with which my aunt and Berenice had treated the old man, and I hastened to reply, warmly:

"Yes, I will undertake that you shall have supper and bed, although neither may be as good as what they could have given you up at the great house. But what little we have you shall share. Stay, let me carry your pack for you." He had a small one strapped on his back. "Indeed, indeed, I am fitter to do it than you."

"Thank you," he said, slowly, taking a long look at my face, and then scrutinising that of Kitty's. "You seem, both of you, as if you were good children; and your offer to take my pack proves as much. But I'll carry it myself still. Little one," and he turned to Kitty, "what have you got those sticks for?"

"For mother's fire, please," she said, dropping a little curtsey. "I have just been getting them in the woods."

"My aunt," I interposed, "who lives in the great house here, kindly allows us to pick up loose bits from under the trees. We are poor, as sister says, and so every little helps."

"And you are duly thankful, I suppose?" said the old man, sarcastically. "Beggars must not be choosers, you know, as I heard just now myself."

I blushed scarlet with shame for my aunt.

"Indeed, indeed," I cried, "you must not judge Aunt Mary too harshly, for I see, from what you say, that you overheard it. She must have been out of sorts this morning."

"And I suppose that a voice, which answered her, and which I think I recognise," he interrupted, looking at me keenly again, "belonged to someone who was not out of sorts, eh?"

Before I could answer I heard the quick gallop of a horse, and my poor, weak heart gave a great bound, for I recognised in that elastic footfall the step of the thoroughbred that young Mr. Everleigh rode.

In my embarrassment I stepped quickly aside, though, of course, there was no danger; and in stepping aside, my foot slipped on a

stone, my ankle turned, and with an unconscious cry of pain, I sank to the earth.

The rider was off his horse and at my side, and had lifted me in his arms, even before the old beggar, who stood so close to me, could stoop to assist me.

"It is only a sprain," I stammered, trying to free myself, yet feeling, oh, so happy in those strong arms. "I am sure I can walk."

"But I know you can't," said Mr. Everleigh, impetuously. "How shall I ever forgive myself? It was my rapid gallop that made you start."

"No, no," I cried, "I was talking to this poor old man, and it came on me so suddenly—you are not a bit to blame—only I have been foolish. But do let me try to walk."

My earnestness, joined to my struggles, induced him to yield. He released me from his arms. But the instant I put my foot to the ground, the agony was such that I almost shrieked. I bit my lip till the blood came, however, and kept silence.

Mr. Everleigh snatched me again into his arms. "I knew it would be so," he cried, "and now you must let me carry you. John," and he called to a groom, who had been following him, "ride, at once, to Dr. Lander's. We must, my dear Miss Childleigh, have this foot bandaged without delay."

"And I will lead your horse to the cottage," interposed the old beggar, "and tie him there. Come on, little Kitty, you and I will follow."

When we got home the house was filled with the smell of crullers which mamma was baking for the feast that was to be given up at Aunt Mary's after the fair. Poor mamma, she looked tired to death, and when she saw me she fairly gave up for a moment; but Mr. Everleigh, in a few kind words put her fears to rest, and long before the physician came, my injured foot was swathed and bandaged so that Dr. Lander declared he had been "regularly taken in."

When evening came my foot was ever so much better, so much so that when Mr. Everleigh returned with a carriage and insisted that we should all go up to my aunt's, to the fair, as we had promised, I was only too willing to consent.

For the first time in our acquaintance there was something in Mr. Everleigh's manner that made even me, humble as I was, think that I was not without a charm for him.

The beggar had crept, unobtrusively, into a corner while my foot was being bandaged, but Kitty, remembering him, left me when she found the hurt was not serious.

"Poor old man," she said, "we had nearly forgotten you. You must be hungry. Here, eat some of these crullers, and when mamma has finished with Maggie she will make you a cup of tea."

The cup of tea was made in due time, and a substantial supper set before the mendicant; in fact, all the cold meat we had in the house. When Mr. Everleigh returned and we proposed to go, the old beggar rose to his feet.

"I am a stranger to you, ma'am," he said, addressing mamma, "and naturally you will not wish to leave me here in your house. I will wait outside till you come back."

"Wait outside?" cried mamma, "and in the cold? No, your face is an honest face if there ever was one. Sit down again here by the fire, and stay; and sleep here to-night, and take dinner with us to-morrow. It will be a homely meal, for a Thanksgiving one, but such as it is you are welcome to it."

"Heaven bless you, ma'am!" said the old man, with a shaky voice, and I thought I saw tears in his eyes. I am sure I heard him murmur, as he turned away to hide his emotion: "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

The charity fair, as the reader by this time has understood, was to be held in my aunt's spacious apartments. Everybody was to be there. The governor even, who was on a visit to his brother, a near neighbour, was expected to attend. It was to be a most brilliant affair.

So, when the dining-room was all a glitter

with lights, and echoed with gay voices, and shone with handsome dresses, and beheld the presence of the most distinguished society of the county; and was filled with stalls of pretty things, the big, chintz-covered chair was wheeled into the hall, and I, my sprained foot resting on a cushion, sat in it, with a table of pretty nick-nacks before me; and Mr. Everleigh by me.

My aunt did not look in a good humour, however, though her fair could not have been more of a success, and though everybody praised her philanthropy. Berenice, too, wore a scowl that spoiled all her blonde beauty.

Somewhere about ten o'clock, when business was at its briskest, there came a roll of wheels on the drive, and a bustle at the door. Presently Jack, who had gone to see what was the matter, rushed back, his grey eyes dancing.

"Oh, Berry, I say," he cried out, stifling a burst of laughter, "you know the beggar; the old man we turned off this morning? Well, he's come back again, here at the door, and oh, my buttons, but he's our uncle from China!"

My aunt, in her black silk and point lace, stood behind a stall of cakes and ices. She turned sharply at Jack's words. He saw her look of consternation, and screamed with laughter again.

"I say now, mamma, it's true. Don't you wish you'd let me give him the cold turkey instead of making it into sandwiches?"

My aunt did not utter a word. But she hurried to the door, and Berenice followed.

There he stood, our long expected uncle from China, a little, weather-beaten old man, with a pinched, pale face. A wicked twinkle lit his eyes.

My aunt rushed up to him at once, and would have smothered him with kisses. But he merely gave her the tips of his yellow fingers.

"I made acquaintance with your niece this morning," he said, with a dry, chuckling laugh, turning to me as he came in, "and the little girl there too," indicating Kitty. "She is poor Marian's child, eh? She's got her mother's fair face and good heart. She gave the beggar a welcome, which some others I know of didn't. Ah, well, I suppose it's human nature. But I'll make it up to her all the same. Never turn a needy man from your door, Mrs. Childleigh. You know what the good Book says about entertaining angels unawares?"

Poor aunt! The look on her face was too ludicrous! In spite of our relationship, I laughed till my sides ached. But Berenice went to her room and cried herself to sleep.

Well, there is little more to tell. It really was our uncle from China, who had chosen to come to us, wearing the guise of a beggar; and if only my aunt had been consistent in her charity, her long cherished expectations might have been realised.

As it was, the China fortune went to me and Kitty and Jack; and Berenice got never a penny. And, moreover, when Horace Everleigh did speak (he had spoken that evening, before our uncle declared himself) it was me he asked to be his wife.

Berenice takes it all bitterly to heart, and my aunt is inconsolable; but I, believing that in this life, and in the life which is to come, we get only our just deserts, have nothing to say.

"Yes," remarks my uncle, "Maggie and Kitty and Jack shall inherit all I have. They were kind to me when they did not know who I was; that's the sort of people I believe in."

E. G. J.

THE BASIS OF SUCCESS.

A MAN'S success in life depends more upon his character than upon his talents or his genius. The word character comes from a term which means to "engrave upon" or to "cut in." Character is that inner, substantial and essential quality which is wrought into the very soul, and makes a man what he actually is. Therefore, if one's character is good he is sound and safe; but if his character is bad, he is unsound and unsafe.

A man of upright character, even though he may not be intellectually brilliant, will almost surely work his way in the world and achieve an honourable position. On the other hand, a man who is destitute of character, or whose character is bad, though he may have great talents, is apt to waste his life in one way or another, and at last become a wreck.

THEIR FIRST BABY. (AN OLD NURSE'S STORY.)

"The first baby is a great event, I can tell you," said old Mrs. Floss, as she knitted away at a wonderful little white hood. "There's the Walkers, now; they had their first boy only a little while ago, and to hear 'em talk you'd have thought the end of the world had come, and that there was to be no more babies.

"From the minute Dr. Jalep said, 'It's a fine boy,' the whole of that family became 'e'en a most too proud to live. They had the event put into the daily papers, to be copied everywhere; and they wrote to all their acquaintances, and telegraphed to all their relations.

"All the members of both sides of the family that could come up to be introduced to the new baby did come. There was Mr. Walker's pa and ma, and Mrs. Walker's pa and ma—Mr. and Mrs. Willoughby—and Aunt Jane, and Uncle Samuel and Grand-Aunt Podgers, and Aunt Maria, and Aunt Sarah and her husband, Mr. Brown, and five little Browns, and Grand-Aunt Jones, and old Mrs. Turtle, that was Mr. Walker's nurse when he was a baby. The house was like a tavern at fair-time.

"I can remember how they looked when I walked into the parlour with the baby on my arm. It was very small and red, but its dress was long enough for me, and its cap was real lace. 'Oh,' says one. 'Ah,' says another. It was like rockets on the fifth of November. I handed baby to its Grandpa Walker, who put back its cap, looked at its head, and said, 'What a development of benevolence! This child will be a philanthropist.' Then Grandma Walker took him, and says she, 'What a beauty! His pa over again; not a bit like his ma.'"

"Then Grandma Willoughby took it and said, 'Very handsome, but not what its ma was at its age.' And they all kissed and hugged it until Uncle Samuel's turn came. He was a bachelor, and not used to babies, and he took it in his arms, kind of gingerly, and says he:

"I don't know what you mean by calling it handsome. He's as red as a boiled lobster, and all shrivelled up like a raisin; and he hasn't any eyebrows, nor teeth, nor hair. I say what I think. I don't see how this child is ever to look like folks. It's more like a monkey, only uglier."

"I—I—I think it is a monkey," says one of the youngest Browns. "Why don't it have an organ?"

"Oh, how cunning!" says Mrs. Brown. "No, Tommy, dear, 'tis not a monkey. It's Auntie Walker's dear, pretty little baby."

"You might bring your children up a little better, ma'am," said old Mrs. Walker, in a rage. "My first grandchild a monkey, indeed!"

"I'm not sure, ma'am," says Mrs. Willoughby "that the dear boy is any more your grandchild than mine, ma'am."

"I'm his father's mother, ma'am," says Mrs. Walker.

"I am its mother's mother, a much nearer relation," says Mrs. Willoughby.

"But you must confess that the paternal relations are more strongly united by the bonds of consanguinity than the maternal," says Grandfather Walker.

"She won't, nor I neither," says Grandfather Willoughby. "All the long words out of the dictionary won't make truth out of nonsense and absurdity like that."

"You haven't had the advantage of a thorough education, sir, and I cannot stoop to argue with you," says Grandfather Walker.

"Don't mind him, pa," said Miss Willoughby. "He knows the mother's relations are nearest, and it mortifies him into saying such things."

"Thank you, Miss Willoughby," says Mrs. Walker. "I feel myself twice as much the baby's aunt as you are—and my dear sister feels it too."

"By this time baby was screaming and I told 'em it was time to take it to its ma. And glad enough he was to go. He was a fine, healthy child, and might have got on splendidly if it hadn't been for its relations—but amongst them they almost finished him. Grandma Walker had great notions about cold bathing and fresh air and light clothing; and Grandma Willoughby believed in soothing syrup and paregoric, and never would let him be taken out of the room except in a double blanket shawl. Great-Aunt Jones was a homeopathist, and had a book and a box of little bottles; and Miss Walker had an electric machine, which she said was better than any medicine in the world."

"The consequence was that whenever baby sneezed Grandma Walker stripped off all his clothes and ducked him in ice water, and shower-bathed him through a colander, and wrapped him in a wet sheet, and put him in what she called a "pack." Regular water-cure practice, she declared. Then Grandma Willoughby would come screaming into the room, strip off the wet sheet, rub him with flannel, toast him at the fire, wrap him up in furs and blankets, and give him a hot drink of some sort; and the quarrel would arouse Grand-Aunt Jones, who would rush in with her book and box and cram him with pellets, and Miss Walker, who was very fat, would follow the others into the nursery with her electric machine, and give the poor child a shock; and poor little Mrs. Walker could only cry, and say to me when they were gone, "Oh, nurse, if I only knew which was right. They are all so anxious for the dear child's welfare; but which is right?"

How could I tell her when I knew they were all wrong?

"Then there were all its little boy-cousins pinching poor baby, putting peas into its ears, taking it out of bed and dragging it about, if one left the room a moment; and the little girl-cousins who would kiss it whenever they saw it; and its Grandpa Walker, who tossed it in the air; and its Grandma Willoughby, who always hit it against something when he dandled it; and all its aunts and uncles, who gave it candy and choked it, and tried whether it could drink coffee or liked lobster-salad; and it's no wonder that finally poor baby was taken really ill—dangerously so. Then my spirit arose. I called 'em all together, and I made 'em a speech. I told 'em how misguided they were, and I asked 'em to go, and give me a chance to save the child's life. So, though they were as mad as hops, I got rid of 'em, and baby lived and did well."

"He's quite a big boy now, and I suppose he'd like to be made a fuss with, and coddled, and stuffed and petted; but, bless you! not one of the lot more than remembers his advent. There's a new baby in the family, and they've turned their attention to that."

FACETIE.

A TRULY ODD FORCE.

Mrs. MALAPROP, during the late hard weather, was heard to inquire whether the cold was in any way supposed to be occasioned by positive or negative eccentricity? —Punch.

COMMERCIALITIES.

THE process of "flying a kite" depends on one's knowledge of how to "raise the wind."

A bill of sale is an ingenious contrivance by which confiding individuals are, as well as their furniture, "sold."

As a general rule, when a man has only "one shot in the locker" he shoots the moon with it.

When new companies offer exorbitant "interest" it may be safely inferred that the promoters have little or no "principle."

The proper place to transport advertising swindlers to would be "Puffin' island."

It is a great pity that fraudulent brokers cannot be compelled to exchange the Stocks for the Pillory.

People who are everlastingly trying to "do" a bill are generally too lazy to do anything else.

The definitions of "insolvency" vary according to circumstances, thus: nations "repudiate;" Banks "suspend payment;" merchants "liquidate;" and small tradespeople "bust up."

—Funny Folks.

A PROBLEM SOLVED.

A YANKEE patent-medicine man warrants that, if taken in time, his Cough Elixir would have "suspended Mahomet's coughin'."

—Funny Folks.

HAPPILY RARE.

THE papers say that "at Philadelphia a constable was shot by a boy of fifteen." Fifteen! We should think that was a boy of a thousand!

—Funny Folks.

LITTLE TOMMY.—They are "Coffee Taverns," not "Toffee Caverns."

—Funny Folks.

EPISODES IN HIGH LIFE.

(From Jeames's Sketch Book.)

SIR CHARLES: "I ought to take you down to dinner, duchess; but the staircases of these London houses are so absurdly narrow, you know!"

—Punch.

TIME WAS MADE FOR SLAVEYS.

MISSUS: "Do you know, Henry, I do believe after one or two lessons I shall be able to cook a dinner as well as anyone, and then we need not keep a servant. Won't that be a saving? (Not a saving of time though. As a rule, when the cook doesn't have a holiday the Doreturtles dine at six, and it's half-past seven now and the rabbit not skinned yet, and—) By the way, Henry, how do you begin to skin a rabbit?"

—Judy.

A DIGNIFIED FACE.

LADY GAY SPANKER (to her husband): "Oughtn't we to be trotting on, dear?"

SMALL MAN ON DONKEY: "Ta-ta for the present, then! I don't like riding fast to covert."

—Punch.

HYPERCRITICISM AT A BALL.

GRACE (whispering): "What lovely boots your partner's got, Mary!"

MARY (ditto): "Yes, unfortunately he shines at the wrong end."

"A SORT ANSWER."

FEMALE EPICURE (to itinerant oyster salesman): "Oh, mister, I'm sure that was a bad one!"

OYSTER SALESMAN (indignantly): "What d'yer mean? Then you shouldn't 'a' swallowed it, mum! I've been in this trade a matter o' ten years, and never—"

F. E.: "Well, it certainly left a nasty taste."

O. S.: "Well, there's no denyin' that some on 'em is 'igher in flavour than others!"

—Punch.

A BOON FOR SCHOOLBOYS.

A SCOTCH paper advertises boys' jackets as defying anything to beat them.

—Fun.

"GOOD INTENTIONS."

SCOT, on Waterloo Bridge: "Heh! To think I save a bawbee every time I cross the bonny brig! I'll just pit in the plate the next time I gang t' the kirk!"

—Punch.

"JUST SO."

ARGUMENTATIVE PARTY: "Look 'ere. Suppose I'm Lord Chomston and you's Chetewayer, and suppose my pipe's the campsh—d'yer thinksh yer could take it without me a-seein' yer?—d'yer thinksh I could see yer without (hic) yer

took it? D'yer thinsh hif I was properly re-trenched yer could take it at all? No, give me a man as re-trenches, and conducts himself as sich." —Fun.

A FAIR INFERENCE.

THE reason that ladies dye their hair of a light gold colour must be that by so doing they get rid of dark care. —Fun.

"UP IN A BALLOON, BOYS."

WHICH is the merriest place in the world?—That above the atmosphere, because there all bodies lose their gravity. —Fun.

SAWS.

THESE proverbs I've taken at random:
"De gustibus non disputandum"
Meant—never contend

With the tastes of your friend,
For you probably can't understand 'em.

"Still waters run deep;" this is stunning,
And really most excellent funning,

For, if they are still
Perhaps somebody will
Explain how they come to be running.

"Take care of the pence and the pounds
will
Take care of themselves;" but it sounds
ill

When copper we're told
To treat better than gold,

So I call this indifferent counsel. —Fun.

ESSEX-IVELY TRUE.

IF our commander-in-chief in South Africa has made any blunder at all, it follows, we think, that what is a "Chelmsford" blunder must be a "capital" one. —Fun.

HISTORIC NOTE.

THE most thoughtful of all our kings was Henry VIII., for he was never a thin-king. —Fun.

"ON TRAMP."

FIRST SAWNEY: "Faar are ye ga'n the day, Sandy?"

SECOND DITTO: "I'm ga'in the len'th o' Kintore."

FIRST DITTO: "Winna ye tak the train?"

SECOND DITTO: "Na, I'm in a bit o' a hurry the day. 'I'm ga'in' to travel." —Fun.

"NOT IN THESE SHOES."

MAMMA: "Many a young fellow, Willie, would be glad to step into your shoes."

WILLIE: "I think not, ma, for these have sharp-pointed nails sticking up in them." —Fun.

SO UNEXPECTED.

Scene: A chophouse. Present (among others) Jones, with newspaper, and Brown.

JONES: "Seen this about the Prince of Wales, Brown? Awfully narrow escape."

BROWN: "No. How was that?"

JONES: "He was just going for a drive when the horses bolted—smashed the carriage to atoms."

BROWN: "And what became of the coachman?"

JONES: "It doesn't say."

BROWN: "And the horses?"

JONES: "Well, there's nothing about them ither, but it says 'the Prince displayed the utmost coolness.'"

BROWN: "What, didn't he turn pale?"

JONES: "No."

BROWN: "Nor faint?"

JONES: "No."

BROWN: "Nor burst into tears? Nor call 'murder?' Or tremble all over? Or cry for his mother or anything of that?"

JONES: "No, nothing of the sort."

BROWN: "Well, he is a brave chap! Fancy! not faint, or tremble, or die or anything! Only fancy! Well, I——" (Is lost in hopeless wonder at the wholly inexplicable appearance of courage in a Prince.)
Curtain. —Fun.

THE RECEIVING SHIP.

YONDER she floats, an old hulk on the water;
Glow through her port holes the sunset
low sinking;

Sea-grass and barnacles seem to have
caught her
Just when her planking is warping and
shrinking.

Bow and stern anchored, dismantled, decay-
ing,
Motionless, save where the tide gives her
motion,

Wind, stream and weather alike on her
preying,

Her, in the past without peer on the ocean,
Her that one time was proud, careless rover.
Ah! how she sailed, how she sailed the
seas over!

Friends to greet, foes to meet, loud her
guns thundering;

Then like a living thing riding the surges:
White her wings, swift she sped, all the
world wondering—

Sped in the South where the hurricane
urges;

North, where the spray as it flecks the prow
freezes,

West, o'er water-waste, well-named Pacific,
East, where the spice-lands perfume the
soft breezes;

There where the Indian wave, lashing
terrible,

With the persistent monsoon battle wages;
Where the typhoon in the Yellow Sea rages;
There where the coral reefs, stretching in
acres,

Give out no warning by ripple or breakers;
Sailed by a skipper in gallantry peerless,
Skilful her way o'er the water-plain shap-
ing;

Manned by a crew, stout, obedient, fearless,
Iceberg and tempest and reef-rock escap-
ing.

Never a better, staunch, grim, self-reliant,
The Union Jack carried at gaff-peak defiant.

Look at her now; but a few know her story;
Tell it to others they listen in wonder—
Wonder to hear how in days of her glory,
Fell the red cross at the sound of her
thunder.

There she rides, keel, timbers, planking
half rotten,

Veteran, disabled through battles and
cruises,

Services rendered the country forgotten,
Moored in these waters to sink in the
oozes.

Name that she bore our proud history
hallows;

Battles she won us will live there for ever;
Give her a grave in the slime of those
shallows?

Let her worn skeleton rot there? Ah!
never!

She shall not lie in the mud of the harbour;
Let them once more in her bravery garb
her,

Raise from the bed where it slumbers each
anchor,

Set every rag of her canvas upon her,
Main-sheet and fore-sheet, grib-sheet and
spanker,

Topsails, to'gallantsails, royals, moon-
rakers,

Then send her forth in all glory and
honour,

Mid-wave to sink in, or crash on the
breakers,

So her torn timbers for ages may lie there.
Queen of the sea, let her wander and die
there.

Cradled in foam, let her death-bed be ocean;
Lash to the peak the old banner so glorious,
Borne as she bore it o'er foeman victorious;

Let the winds guide, as they choose to,
her motion;

Let the storm deal with her rather than
give her

Shame in the harbour and grave in the
river.

T. D. E.

A SUMMER SHOWER.

WHAT a spur and impulse the summer shower is! How its coming hurries up the slow, jogging life! The traveller along the dusty road arouses from his reverie at the warning rumble behind the hills; the children hasten from the field or from school; the farmer steps lively and thinks fast. In the hayfield, at the first signal gun of the elements, what a commotion! How the horse-rake rattles, how the pitchforks fly, how the white sleeves play and twinkle in the sun or against the dark background of the coming storm! One man does the work of two or three. It is a race with the elements, and the haymakers do not like to be beaten. The rain that is life to the grass when growing, is poison to it after it becomes cured hay, and it must be got under shelter or put into snug nooks, if possible, before the storm overtakes it.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

GERMAN OMELETS.—Beat up the yolks of two eggs, mix a small teaspoonful of flour and one of corn flour in a tablespoonful of cold milk or cream, and stir into the eggs; pour on this a quarter of a pint of boiling milk, sweeten lightly, and flavour with a few drops of extract of vanilla. When ready to bake the omelets, beat the whites of the eggs to a strong froth, and stir altogether; rub two common pudding plates with just enough butter to prevent the omelets sticking, pour the mixture on to them, bake in a quick oven until set; they will be done in about ten minutes. Fold them over, turn on to a hot dish, sift sugar over, and serve. These may be made as savoury German omelets by substituting salt for sugar, and, if liked, adding a little pepper and chopped parsley.

INVALID COOKERY.—It is often necessary to give farinaceous substances and eggs in the form of puddings, and yet to avoid sugar. In such cases the three following receipts for savory puddings will be found useful. In making custard puddings, whether for boiling or baking, the milk should be boiled before putting it to the eggs. Unboiled milk, when used for making puddings, is apt to curdle, leaving a substance very unsuited to the digestion of an invalid.

RICE CREAM.—Bake one ounce of best rice in half pint of milk; when done, remove the skin from the top. Dissolve a quarter of an ounce of gelatine, previously soaked in two tablespoonfuls of cold milk, in half a pint of boiling milk or cream, add the yolk of an egg, two ounces of loaf sugar, and a little extract of vanilla; stir over the fire for five minutes, mix with the rice, pour it into a mould, and let it remain until set. More or less sugar may be used according to taste; the quantity given will make the cream rather sweet.

GEMS.

I HAVE searched for happiness in the elegant life of the drawing-room, in sumptuous banquets and in the dissipation of balls and theatres. I have taken part in every festival. I sought for it also in the possession of gold, in the evitement of gaming, in the illusions of marvellous romances, but in vain: while one hour in visiting a sick person, in consoling one in affliction, in helping an unfortunate man, has sufficed to produce me enjoyment more delicious than all worldly delights.

THE hardest thing for a man to do is to own that he has made a mistake in his judgment. It is an impeachment of his weak side—his mind.

HARD work prevents worry. "Work, but don't worry," the old saw says; but some people don't work, so they take it out in worrying.

THE majority of parents do not understand their children; they are kept under restraint, and are not properly developed.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

AQUATIC.—Since coming to London the Oxford crew have much improved, and although at starting it will doubtless be even better, we confidently anticipate the victory of the Light Blues.

PARTIES requiring the addresses of correspondents must apply to the Editor, enclosing full name and address, as a guarantee of good faith.

JOSEPH O.—I. We have not the materials for a statistical statement on this point, but we presume good and pure women marry only the men they want. They refuse the others. 2. There is only, by the common consent of Christians, a place for works of necessity and mercy on the day of rest. Other work is to be done within the six days.

JACQUES.—Go by all means. We do not think so meanly of the young ladies in your section as to suppose that a man otherwise eligible will be cast off for ever for the want of a pitiful twenty pounds, which, no doubt, he will have by-and-by.

DAN.—We know nothing about the remedy mentioned, and think before anyone tries it he should consult his family physician.

D. P.—Consult your mother on the subject. She would probably be able to find out what the young man's "intentions" are without committing you in any way. A girl should never allow her anxiety on such a subject to lead her into doing anything which would in the least be inconsistent with perfect self-respect.

T. G.—We think your idea is a good one, and that it will benefit you to "get out among folks."

SCHOLAR.—You could learn shorthand and bookkeeping without a teacher if you should study long enough and hard enough. You could learn them much sooner and more easily with a teacher. Go to Paternoster Row for the books, and after examining some select the ones you think easiest to understand.

ALICE.—Unless there be some redeeming features or great force of character, which you have not yet detected in this young man, it does not seem prudent to attach him to you. He being a mechanic or five years older than you is not the point. Some men have capacity for rising—some have not. You have not.

NEBO.—We think it possible that she may again come to a better mind, though we doubt if it is worth your while to follow her further. You will not covet her when she is your neighbour's wife, and you will probably find someone as fair, and you can hardly have one more like her. Do not despond.

AN ANXIOUS INQUIRER.—Can be obtained from Mr. Stanley, 11, Gordon Grove, Brixton, London. Enclose 3s. 6d. in stamps.

ADVANCE.—We do not think there is much chance for you in Australia.

J. J. S.—Three per cent.

PAULINE.—Use the best yellow soap and oatmeal.

A CONSTANT READER.—Six months notice expiring at the same time of the year as that at which the tenancy commenced.

S. T. W. B.—Your situation is certainly peculiar and trying. The young man's request is singular and so unusual that you should consider it well, and you will not be blamed by rational persons for hesitation. You dislike to appear to distrust him. But why does he ask this, unless he distrusts you, before marriage? He may seem very honest, but his self-respect cannot have been developed. You will do well to find some business friends and obtain their counsel before taking this step.

INQUIRER.—The memorandum book published by S. Davis & Co., sewing-machine manufacturers, 15, Blackman Street, Borough, contains double the quantity of paper found in an ordinary penny memorandum book; Price one halfpenny.

H. BID.—1. The knighthood is for life only. 2. Edward Augustus, Duke of Kent and Strathearn and Earl of Dublin.

G. B.—A special license is granted by the Archbishop of Canterbury at the Faculty Office, Doctors' Commons, through a proctor. The fees payable for license stamp, &c., average £29 8s. An ordinary license can be had at the Faculty Office between 10 and 4. Cost, £2 2s. 6d., available for any part of the country. In the country apply at the Bishop's Registry. One of the parties must have resided for fifteen days within the parish church boundary.

MINNIE, twenty-four, tall, dark hair and eyes, would like to correspond with a young man about twenty-eight, blue eyes.

ROMULUS and **REMUS**, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies with a view to matrimony. Romulus is twenty-one, fair, in a good position. Remus is twenty, tall, handsome, an officer in the merchant service.

E. K., twenty, would like to correspond with a respectable young girl about eighteen with a view to forming an engagement. A domestic servant preferred.

MADEIRA, eighteen, good-looking, medium height, fair, would like to correspond with a tall gentleman about twenty-four.

HAMMOCK and **BLACKBAG**, two seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with two young ladies. Hammock is twenty-three, good-looking, fond of music and children. Blackbag is twenty-one, tall, fond of children, loving.

TRAVELLER, twenty-six, tall, dark, well-educated, with £150 a year, would like to meet with a young lady who has £300 or £400.

STEE MOORINGS, a seaman in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with a young lady with a view to matrimony. He is twenty-four. Respondent must be about his own age, loving.

LOUISE and **HILDA**, two friends, wish to correspond with two young gentlemen. Louise is twenty-two, tall, fair, of a loving disposition. Hilda is nineteen, light blue eyes, tall.

JONATHAN E., twenty-two, dark hair, hazel eyes, tall, fond of home and children, loving, would like to correspond with a young lady about twenty, fond of home, good-looking, medium height.

A LOVER'S MISTAKE.

Such a mite of a girl!

Such a tent of a hat!

Breton suit, navy blue,

Little hands, and all that,

Silk umbrella, new book,
Sea-shore, and fine weather—
These factors all given,
Now add them together.

You will find, as result,
Pretty Madge, when it's done,
How one wishes the ending
Would be "carry one."

But I hate that big hat
On account of its size,
I can never be sure
Of the hue of her eyes.

And if nearer I come,
Just to see if they're blue,
Then—she tells me "the hat
Is not shelter for two."

There she goes—it, I mean—
To the shore. Seems to me
That I long to look out
On the beautiful sea.

Now she droops her sweet length
On the shimmering sand;
Now she leans her fair head
On her little gloved hand.

As I look at the hat
Such a longing I feel
Just to see the sweet face
That a turn would reveal.

That I steal softly near,
And a clear pebble throw;
She turns a dreadful hat—
'Tis her maiden aunt Jo!

E. L.

ADA and **MINNIE**, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men. Ada is eighteen, blue eyes. Minnie is eighteen, dark brown hair, hazel eyes, thoroughly domesticated.

LILLIE, eighteen, medium height, dark brown hair, hazel eyes, fond of home, would like to correspond with a young man about twenty-one, tall, of a loving disposition, good-looking.

G. A. and **R. B.**, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies with a view to matrimony. G. A. is twenty-three, medium height. R. B. is twenty, tall. Respondents must be fond of music and dancing, good-looking.

W. S., twenty, of a loving disposition, dark, domesticated, fond of home and children, would like to correspond with a young man about twenty-two, good-tempered.

L. M., eighteen, brown hair, dark blue eyes, medium height, wishes to correspond with a young man about twenty-one, dark.

LIZZIE and **NELLIE**, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men with a view to matrimony. Lizzie is fair, light brown hair, dark blue eyes, medium height, fond of music. Nellie is good-looking, all, fair, fond of home and children.

CLARICE, twenty-four, light hair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children, would like to correspond with a young man about the same age, dark, good-looking.

LOUISE LEMUE, seventeen, fair, brown hair, blue eyes, fond of home, would like to correspond with a gentleman with a view to matrimony.

J. G., twenty, medium height, dark, would like to correspond with a young lady about the same age, fond of home.

HARRIET, twenty, fair, auburn hair, grey eyes, good-looking, of a loving disposition, and fond of home, would like to correspond with a young gentleman about the same age.

D. G. and **G. P.**, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies with a view to matrimony between twenty and twenty-three. D. G. is twenty-one, medium height, dark hair and eyes, fond of home and children. G. P. is twenty-four, dark hair, hazel eyes, dark, medium height.

G. K. and **A. T. C.**, two friends, would like to correspond with two seamen in the Royal Navy. G. K. is twenty-one, dark hair, blue eyes. A. T. C. is nineteen, of a loving disposition, light hair, blue eyes, fond of home and children.

A. E. and **H. P.**, two friends, wish to correspond with two gentlemen. A. E. is twenty-four, good-tempered, fond of home, of a loving disposition. H. P. is twenty, medium height, fair.

E. T., eighteen, thoroughly domesticated, tall, dark, light hair, hazel eyes, fond of home, would like to correspond with a young man about twenty-one, of a loving disposition.

ANNIE and **CLARE**, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men. Annie is twenty, dark, fond of home and children. Clare is fair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition.

L. H., eighteen, brown hair, blue eyes, would like to correspond with a young lady. Respondents must be about seventeen, domesticated, brown hair, blue eyes, dark.

LILLY, twenty-two, fond of home, dark hair and eyes, medium height, good-looking, dark, would like to correspond with a young gentleman. Respondent must be twenty-three, dark, fond of home and children, good-looking.

N. C. and **B. P.**, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies with a view to matrimony. N. C. is twenty-four, dark, handsome. B. P. is good-tempered, blue eyes, fair.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

A BLACKING BOX by—Blackie.

L. A. by—Maud, twenty-four, dark hair and eyes, tall, fond of home and children.

KATIE B. by—Squire, eighteen, dark, good-looking, and fond of music.

OLIVE by—Fantastic, eighteen.

FANNY by—Harry, twenty-one, fond of home and children, good-looking.

OLIVE by—Jack, twenty, dark, fond of home and music.

DANCEY by—S. W.

ALICE by—Willie L., twenty-one, medium height, dark, good-looking.

LAURA by—Frank P.

FRED by—L. R., nineteen, brown hair, blue eyes, and medium height.

CLARA by—J. C. N.

W. G. by—Marion, tall, dark.

ALFRED by—A. M. H., seventeen, brown hair, hazel eyes, loving.

MINNIE by—George M.

PIPER CLAY BOWL by—S. H.

FRANK by—Frank C., nineteen, fair, blue eyes, and medium height.

NETTIE by—H. N., twenty-three, medium height, fond of children.

ROSE by—E. G. S., twenty, tall, good-looking, and of a loving disposition.

RUTHIE by—H. J. B., twenty-two, good-looking, fond of music.

S. C. by—Jack L., twenty-six, brown hair and eyes, medium height, fair.

FAT by—Susanna, twenty-one, fair, light brown hair, grey eyes, thoroughly domesticated.

JAMES by—Olivia, nineteen, fond of home, tall, auburn hair, grey eyes, domesticated.

T. B. by—R. P., twenty-three, dark hair and eyes, fair, of a loving disposition, good-tempered.

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